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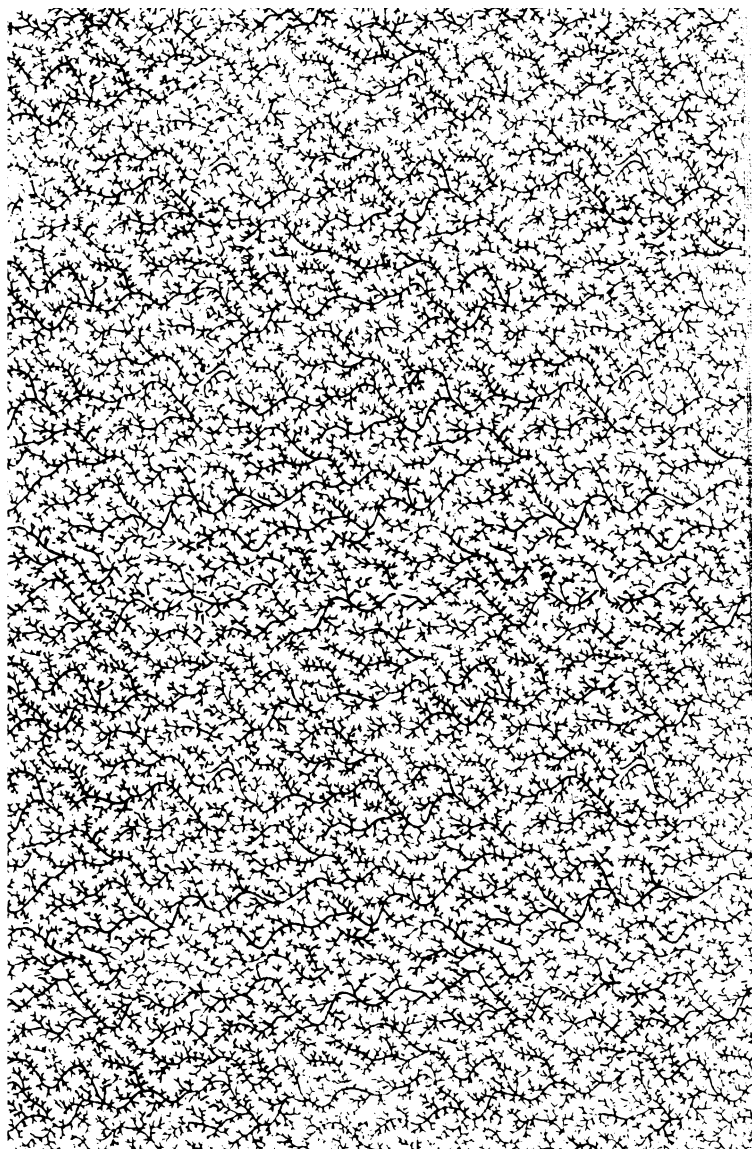
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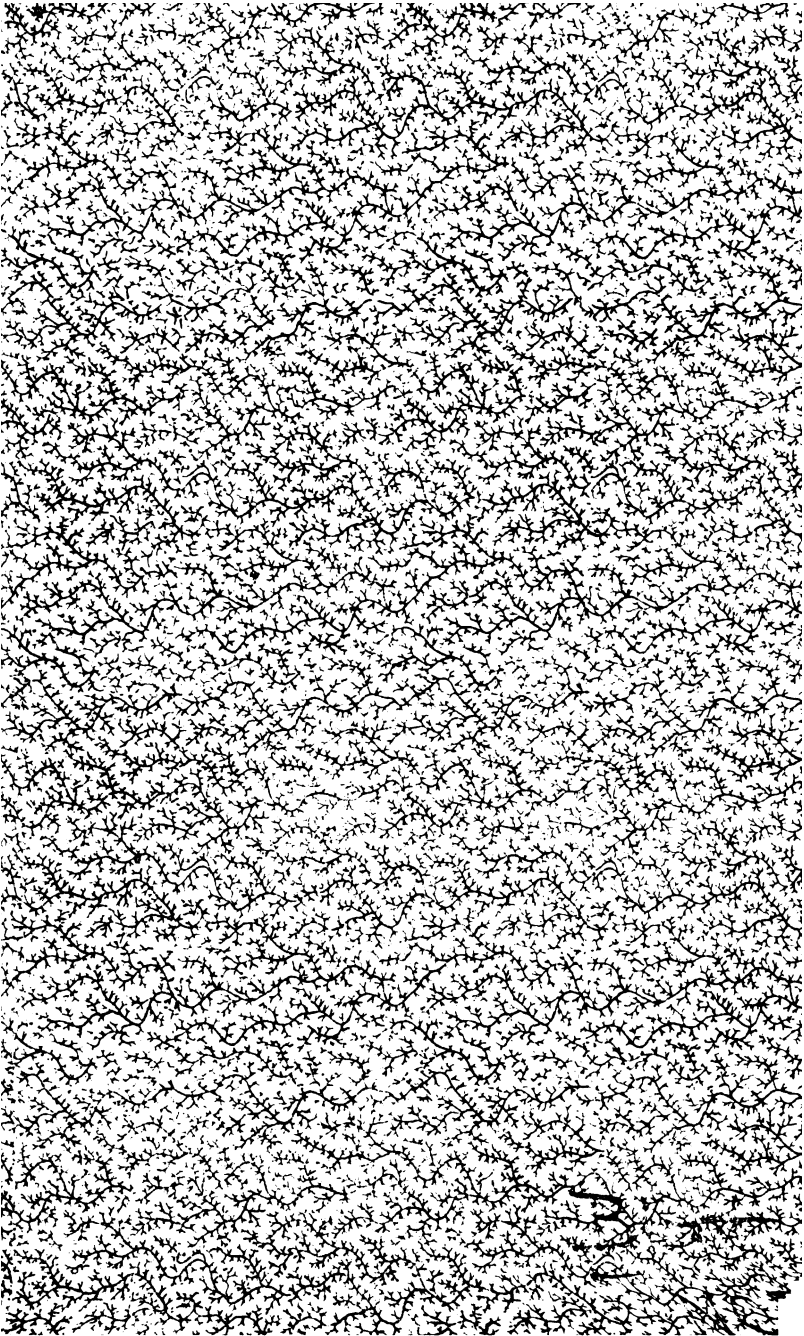
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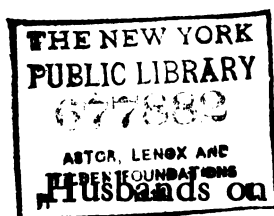
A Comedy in Three Acts

By
W. M. BLATT

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BOSTON
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1914



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CHARACTERS

NANCY GLOVER, *juvenile lead.*

RITA GLOVER, *her sister ; ingénue.*

MRS. GLOVER, *her mother ; about forty.*

CATHERINE, *a handsome Irish girl of twenty ; maid.*

HAMILTON SEAYER, *an aristocratic, self-satisfied and good-looking man of twenty-one.*

ROBERT DEVON, *a good-looking, agreeable man of twenty-three.*

COL. MAYNARD ROWE, *a soldierly man of indefinite age.*

RICHARD FITZGERALD, *a handsome, rollicking, careless Irishman, about twenty-five.*

SAMUEL RUTHERFORD GLOVER, *a boy of nineteen ; college type.*

KRATZ, *a German mechanic, in working clothes and with straggling chin beard.*



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SYNOPSIS

ACT I

The breakfast room in the Glover mansion.

ACT II

The music room.

ACT III

Same as Act I.



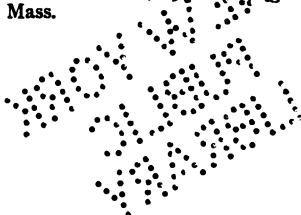
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THE FIRST ACT

SCENE.—*The breakfast room in the Glover house. Table at right centre; doors right and left; a wide door at back, centre, looks out upon the staircase. The room is richly furnished. A luxurious apartment in a large, old-fashioned mansion on Beacon Hill, Boston.*

When the curtain rises, MRS. GLOVER, RITA GLOVER, and SAM GLOVER are at the table, talking, having finished their breakfast. SAM, a good-looking chap of nineteen, has a smoking jacket over his collarless shirt and wears a pair of dilapidated slippers. He is reading a paper. MRS. GLOVER, a comely widow of forty, is in a corsetless negligee, and bustles round the room, setting things to rights. RITA, a pretty girl of eighteen, has her hair in curlers; her nose is red and shiny, and she wears an ill-matched kimono and skirt, and a pair of old un-blackened shoes. She is also reading—a magazine.

SAM.

[*Yawning.*] The man who planned the dance last night was a philosopher. It takes something like genius to realize that holidays were not made for celebrations; that, on the contrary, they were made for resting after a night of celebration. [*Yawning.*] Gee! I'm glad I don't have to take any lectures. I can't spell "cat" to-day.

MRS. GLOVER.

Are you going to stay at home all day, Sam?

SAM.

You bet. Stay home and just loaf. Got to be real spry and cute for to-night. My Greek letter society has a smoker on. I shall be singing until 2 A. M., or until the police stop us.

MRS. GLOVER.

But you won't be fit to study to-morrow then. I thought you said holidays were not made for celebrations.

SAM.

Oh, I've got to go to this one.

RITA.

I should think you could give me to-night. Nancy goes everywhere. You took her to the

Ashburton dance last night, and you'll take her to the next one you go to. And I did so want to attend the McLean subscription.

SAM.

Oh, take your time, Rita. Nancy will be out of the way soon. Then your time will come.

MRS. GLOVER.

Nancy out of the way? Married, you mean?

SAM.

Uh-huh.

MRS. GLOVER.

Sam!

RITA.

[*Simultaneously, with* MRS. GLOVER.]
Blinky! You know something! It happened last night at the dance! A man proposed to Nancy. She accepted him! She's engaged! For goodness' sake, don't sit there like an owl! Speak!

MRS. GLOVER.

Oh, Sam! Please tell us.

SAM.

[*Takes his pipe out of his mouth, lays down his paper and looks about.*] Great Scott! Who pressed the button? All I implied was that

some day, in the not too distant future, Nancy may marry and settle down. Does that call for such an uproar?

RITA.

Now, don't try to fool us. Something did happen. We know you. You never think of any one getting married unless it's suggested to you in italics. Sam dear, good old Sam, dear Blinky, come out with it.

SAM.

[*Puts down his pipe.*] So far as I know, she isn't engaged, nobody proposed to her, and there's absolutely nothing up my sleeves. All I have to base my remark on, so far as last night is concerned —

MRS. GLOVER AND RITA.

Yes!

SAM.

Is the rather mysterious conduct of sister Nancy. She sat out four dances. You know it isn't Nancy to sit out a dance.

RITA.

I knew it. She is engaged! Now, will you tell us peaceably with whom she sat the dances out, or shall we have to kneel down and supplicate for it?

MRS. GLOVER.

Was it Colonel Rowe?

RITA.

Or Mr. Seaver?

MRS. GLOVER.

Or Rob Devon?

RITA.

Or Dick Fitzgerald?

SAM.

[*Slowly.*] Yes.

RITA.

[*Shrieking.*] Yes, *what?*

SAM.

Yes, ma'am.

RITA.

Oh, Blinky. How can you be so mean!

SAM.

Mean? Haven't I answered you? I said, Yes. It was Colonel Rowe and Mr. Seaver and Rob Devon and Dick Fitzgerald. All four of them. She sat out one dance with each.

MRS. GLOVER.

And didn't she say anything?

SAM.

Not a word.

RITA.

Didn't she look flushed or happy, or nervous, or anything?

SAM.

Nancy nervous? Did you ever see Nancy nervous? Might have been flushed or happy, but not nervous. But I will say this. On the way home she kept as mum as an oyster. Several times when I asked questions she either didn't answer at all, or else absent-mindedly. And every once in a while she gave a long chuckle.

RITA.

Blinky, if I find that you know something and won't tell us, I'll never forgive you as long as I live.

SAM.

No, honest, I don't know a thing. Ask my professors.

[RITA crosses stage toward right door.]

RITA.

I shall ask her myself, this minute.

MRS. GLOVER.

Rita! Stay here. Let the poor child sleep. She didn't get home until three o'clock. I heard the clock strike as the carriage drove up.

RITA.

But mother. Think of what may have happened.

MRS. GLOVER.

And if nothing has happened will you be justified in waking her up? Be patient, Rita. [*Enter CATHERINE, centre door.*] Catherine, have you just come from up-stairs?

CATHERINE.

Yes, ma'am.

MRS. GLOVER.

Did you notice if Miss Nancy seemed to be awake?

CATHERINE.

I think so, ma'am. She was singing.

RITA.

[*Making another dash.*] I'll go right up.

MRS. GLOVER.

Rita! Nancy will be here directly. Don't be selfish. Let's all hear the news, if there is any, together.

[*Exit CATHERINE, centre door.*]

RITA.

Oh, pshaw! Blinky, I'll bet you a pound of candy against a necktie that it's Colonel Rowe. Come, be a sport!

SAM.

No, you don't. All a girl ever remembers about a bet is what she was to get out of it. And if she doesn't get it, win or lose, she thinks the man is a piker.

RITA.

Liar. The last time we bet I did buy you a necktie.

SAM.

So you did. That's another reason why I don't like to bet with you. Did you really buy that necktie, or did you make it yourself out of a piece of carpet?

RITA.

It was no worse than the candy you give me.

SAM.

For bad candy, it disappears pretty fast. How red your nose gets, Rita, when you are angry.

RITA.

My nose is not red, and I'm not angry.

MRS. GLOVER.

Children! Sam, tell us more about the dance and Nancy.

SAM.

Oh, Nancy was the belle all right. That brown dress made a great hit. The fellows swarmed around her like bees. About a dozen that I never saw before slapped me on the back and jollied me to beat the band just to make me introduce them. I felt like the business manager of a grand opera star.

RITA.

I knew the brown dress would make a sensation. It's just Nancy's color. Who got the last waltz?

SAM.

I did. That's why I say Nancy puzzles me. I'm almost certain she made some kind of a deal last night, but if she tagged a fellow, he'd have the last waltz, wouldn't he?

RITA.

Naturally, but you can never figure on Nancy. She couldn't be conventional if she tried, and she won't try.

MRS. GLOVER.

Oh, dear, I hope she hasn't thought out some new method of shocking us. I hear her com-

ing. Now, don't hurl questions at her. You know how obstinate she is. If we seem too anxious, she won't tell us anything. Lead up to it gradually, or let her have her own time.

[*Enter NANCY GLOVER, right door, in a becoming house dress, and a somewhat elaborate toilet.*

NANCY.

Have I slept a month, or only a week? Is this to-day, or to-morrow? What time is it?

RITA.

Ten o'clock, and Washington's birthday.

NANCY.

Ten o'clock! Mercy! May I have something to eat?

MRS. GLOVER.

[*Touches bell. Enter CATHERINE, centre door.*] Breakfast for Miss Nancy, Catherine.

[*During next few minutes CATHERINE serves breakfast and NANCY eats.*

RITA.

Was it a pleasant party?

NANCY.

Yes, indeed.

RITA.

Who was the bright particular star?

NANCY.

Well, frankly, I think I was. The brown dress did it. I shall wear brown all the rest of my life. Isn't there some kind of a convent where the nuns wear nothing but brown dresses? If there is one, I must seriously consider entering it.

SAM.

You didn't have much prospect last night of entering a convent.

NANCY.

Even Blinky noticed it, you see.

RITA.

Did anything special—did you dance all the dances?

NANCY.

Most all. All except four. Those four I sat out with—— But wait until I get some ballast aboard. I'm so hungry.

RITA.

Yes, dear.

MRS. GLOVER.

Drink your coffee first. It will refresh you.

NANCY.

[*Yawning.*] Oh! I could sleep hours longer.

RITA.

Now, have you eaten enough to get started?

NANCY.

No,—minute.

MRS. GLOVER.

[*Aside to RITA.*] Sh —

SAM.

Why are you all rigged up, Nancy? Haven't got to go anywhere, have you?

NANCY.

Nope. This is a house dress.

SAM.

What's the matter with the one you generally wear mornings? The wooly skirt and the waist I spilled ink over?

NANCY.

Oh, I'm tired of them, and besides — Well, it goes back to last night. Now listen, everybody.

RITA.

Oh! Nancy!

MRS. GLOVER.

My dear little girl.

NANCY.

Hold on. You don't know what's coming, yet.

RITA.

We suspect.

NANCY.

You lose, then. I had four proposals of marriage last night.

RITA.

Oh, Nancy! Four?

NANCY.

Dick Fitzgerald, Col. Maynard Rowe, Bob Devon, and Hamilton Seaver. How's that for the brown dress?

MRS. GLOVER.

And whom did you accept?

NANCY.

No one.

RITA.

Of course not. String it out as long as you can, Nancy. Take your time. They'll wait.

SAM.

Don't lose your head, Nancy. Choose a good fellow, not a pretty-boy.

MRS. GLOVER.

Oh, my dear, be careful.

RITA.

Don't let them think you are easy.

NANCY.

Say, how many are allowed on the coaching lines? Don't you think I know my little book? Oh, but it was great fun. By the fourth proposal I was as calm as a sherbert, much calmer than the men. I could even sit back and notice their style. Fitzgerald was bold and ardent. He roared hyperboles at me and got as red as a storm signal. Colonel Rowe did it neatly, as if he were surrounding an enemy, calm up to the last charge, and then a fierce but orderly dash for the colors. Poor Bobby Devon got all mixed up. He began every sentence two or three times, and when he finally asked for me I had to make him do it over again to be sure. Hamilton Seaver made a very effective plea, but he omitted to say that he loved me, which I consider essential.

RITA.

Now, Nancy, between us—which is it going to be? Oh, Nancy, only between us. We'll never breathe it to a living soul, cross our necks, hope to die, don't we, Blinky?

SAM.

Oh, it's none of my business. I'm not particularly curious, but if Nancy sees fit to confide in me, I shall treat the matter as confidential.

RITA.

And mother, you can trust mother. Surely, a girl can trust her own mother.

NANCY.

But I haven't decided. I'm very fond of them all.

RITA.

Oh, nonsense. You must like one better than another. A girl can't love two men at once.

NANCY.

I'm not sure that I love him. That's the trouble. Sometimes I think I do and sometimes I think I don't.

RITA.

Aha! I knew it. You do love one of them.

NANCY.

I didn't say—why, yes, I did ; how stupid of me. Well, it's not at all certain, and I shan't marry him or any one else until it is certain, so there.

RITA.

Is it Mr. Seaver ? Oh, it is Mr. Seaver ! He is so manly, so aristocratic. Both his parents are colonial stock. He is a full-blooded son of the Revolution.

NANCY.

Full-blooded ? I should call him rather anæmic.

SAM.

Sure. He's a dope. Fitzgerald is the man. One of the best fellows in the world. Never saw the beat of him at boxing or story-telling, or anything. And there's a magazine article this month that says he's going to be the best sculptor in America. I saw it myself.

RITA.

Mr. Fitzgerald is simply after your money, Nancy. He's as poor as a churchmouse, and he knows poor papa left us well provided for. Don't take him, Nancy.

NANCY.

Dick certainly is hard up. His dress suit is almost antique. He's gained at least fifteen pounds since it was made for him. I don't see how he ever gets it off whole.

RITA.

If it isn't Mr. Seaver, it must be Colonel Rowe. On the whole, he would be a better choice for you, Nancy. Mr. Seaver is nearer my age.

NANCY.

Oh, indeed. Nearer your age. One would think you were my grandchild. So far as the outside world is concerned, you may play with dolls and sit in a high chair for all I care, but in the family circle, please get the dates as follows: You are eighteen; Blinky is nineteen; and I am twenty.

RITA.

And Mr. Seaver is twenty-one.

NANCY.

And Colonel Rowe is, well, indefinite. He may be thirty, or forty, or X.

RITA.

He's about thirty and if he lives to be a hundred he will always look grand, distinguished.

A hero is always a hero. Even after he is dead history will remember forever that he led the forlorn hope at —— What was that place in the Philippines?

NANCY.

I hope history has a better memory than you.

SAM.

I think he dyes his hair. You get it in some lights, and it looks purple.

MRS. GLOVER.

I don't care what you all say, Mr. Devon will make the best husband. You can't help seeing how good-natured and honest he is, a man you can rely on. And you can't say he's after your money, for he has enough of his own.

NANCY.

Now, mother, don't nag me. I won't have you picking out my husband. All you've got to do is wait until I select him and then weep for joy.

MRS. GLOVER.

I do hope it's Robert Devon. A steady, decent boy he always was.

NANCY.

He'll have a chance to show it then, beginning very soon. Mother, you want me to be very careful, don't you ?

MRS. GLOVER.

By all means.

NANCY.

Well, I'm going to be the most careful girl that ever lived. And you are going to help.

MRS. GLOVER.

How ?

NANCY.

I'll tell you what I've arranged. And please don't scream when you hear it.

MRS. GLOVER.

Oh, Nancy. You haven't played another wild, impossible prank, have you ?

NANCY.

You see, these four chaps are all good fellows. I like them all, one more than the others, but all very well. The trouble is, though, that I've never met them except when they were on their good behavior, in moral full dress suits, as it were. Now, what's the use of marrying a man who dances well and makes pretty speeches

at a ball if he's a snarling dyspeptic when he's at home? How do I know that the Colonel, or Bob Devon, or Dick Fitzgerald isn't a perfect nuisance around a house, grumpy or dirty, or selfish or lots of other things?

MRS. GLOVER.

I'm very glad to find you so practical, Nancy.

NANCY.

Now, how many of Rita's friends suspect that only the most unremitting care conceals the fact that her nose is pinker than the rest of her face and much more brilliant?

RITA.

Just keep your reflections general, Nancy, if you want us to enjoy them.

NANCY.

Who that sees Sam at a dance or a party knows what a frightful mania he has?

SAM.

Me? What mania?

NANCY.

Why, that the sounds you make mornings before breakfast are musical.

SAM.

Oh, never mind. The first things you learn on a trombone may not be very melodious, but you just wait.

NANCY.

Is that a threat? But to resume. Some observer has said that it makes no difference what kind of a man you marry, because after you've lived in the same house with him a month, you find you've married some one else.

MRS. GLOVER.

There's a great deal of truth in that.

NANCY.

So I'm not going to run any risks. I shall marry no man unless I've had a chance to observe him at close range for four full weeks.

MRS. GLOVER.

But, Nancy.

NANCY.

And that's what I told all four of my admirers. It came to me like an inspiration. When they asked me to marry them, I said to each one separately: "My good chap, I make no promises; but if you want to accept my conditions, I will consider your proposal. The conditions are that you will be a guest at my

house for a full month, during which time you shall attend to your regular business but remain at home every evening without exception, living a perfectly natural and simple life, as if you were one of the family. And they all accepted.

RITA.

Nancy! You don't mean it!

NANCY.

I do.

MRS. GLOVER.

And are they really coming here with that purpose?

NANCY.

Why not? There are plenty of spare rooms and servants. The inconvenience will be slight, and I'm sure, mother dear, you won't object to helping me in this way to decide the most important question of my life.

SAM.

Well, I'll be hanged.

MRS. GLOVER.

Nancy, how could you dare do such a thing without consulting us? Think of what it means. No privacy whatever for a month. Four strangers quartered on us like an enemy's soldiers.

RITA.

Nancy, of all your preposterous freaks, this is the worst. I for one refuse to put up with it.

SAM.

So do I. I won't stand for it.

MRS. GLOVER.

You must stop them at once. Write notes to each of them immediately.

NANCY.

It's too late! They are coming this morning.

RITA.

What!

NANCY.

I told them the test would begin at eleven o'clock. It must be almost that now.

RITA.

Merciful heavens! Look at us! You low, contemptible, vicious, inconsiderate thing! I'd like to choke you.

MRS. GLOVER.

Nancy! You are not in earnest. You cannot be. It's a joke. Relieve my suspense and admit it.

NANCY.

No. It's not a joke. It's a very serious matter, and I'm extremely disappointed at your attitude. Would you rather have me marry a distasteful person whom I and you, too, would be forced to associate with all our lives after discovering our mistake; when by this very simple arrangement we may become almost certain of his disposition and domestic habits?

MRS. GLOVER.

But it's so improper, so unconventional, so unheard-of.

NANCY.

Improper? Haven't we ever had guests before? Don't our cousins and uncles flock here by droves in the summer?

MRS. GLOVER.

If people should find out! .

NANCY.

They would applaud us to the echo. I marvel so logical a plan was never used before, and I prophesy that it will become the fashion.

SAM.

Jingo! They may be here any minute. Four of them!

RITA.

Oh, Nancy. You wicked, heartless girl!

SAM.

I shall have to wear a linen collar for a month except when I go to bed.

RITA.

And I, oh, how shall I prevent, how shall I keep ——

NANCY.

Your nose from showing up? Carry a powder rag all the time. But anyway ——

RITA.

I shall be revenged, Nancy. I ——

[*The bell rings. RITA screams and exits right door, running; followed by MRS. GLOVER and SAM, also running. Enter CATHERINE centre door, with card tray. NANCY looks at cards.*

NANCY.

Show them in here, Catherine. [*Exit CATHERINE, centre door. Enter centre door, RICHARD FITZGERALD, COL. MAYNARD ROWE, HAMILTON SEAVER and ROBERT DEVON. They are all stylishly and carefully dressed. FITZGERALD, a handsome, jovial Irishman, a little less expensively gotten up than the others; ROWE,*

distinguished and quiet, of undeterminate age, soldierly and good-looking, a scar on his forehead; SEAVER, aristocratic and serious, and very well bred; DEVON, wholesome and attractive, manly, though not very handsome, and just now the only one who is calm and nonchalant. Each carries a large dress-suit case, except FITZGERALD, who has a hand-bag, and SEAVER, who has two dress-suit cases. They line up before the centre door.] Good-morning, gentlemen. Put your boxes anywhere for the present. The servants will take them to your rooms later. Make yourselves perfectly at home. [They make a movement to break ranks.] But before we start in, let us fully understand the conditions. Home every night; no proposals for a month; then in exactly thirty days from now I shall bring in my verdict. You start almost even. One of you has a slight advantage, but it is quite possible that during the month he may lose it by his own conduct, or by some other contestant showing better qualities. Now then, break ranks. [The men put their grips down in a corner.] You will find us a little unprepared at first. My folks didn't learn of the scheme until about five minutes ago, but it will all adjust itself shortly. Oh, don't wait for invitations. Sit down. Remember you are to be perfectly natural. No putting on airs. This is the dining-room. You may lounge about

here or in any other room that you like. [*The men sit up very straight.*] Well, why don't you lounge? [*The men slink into uncomfortable positions in an effort to obey orders.*] What's the matter? Why don't you talk? Is it going to be this way all the month? For goodness' sake, somebody, say something.

FITZGERALD.

Ye see, Miss Glover, we're a bit embarrassed. It's such a long time since anny wan of us made a call of exactly this kind.

NANCY.

Well, don't you think I am nervous, too? I'm just ready to jump out of my skin. I wish I had never been born. If you four idiots had let me alone last night, I should never have got myself into this muddle. Just on account of a silly brown dress. I shall never hear the last of it. Never. My sister Rita says she'll never forgive me, and mother shrank away as if I had committed murder.

FITZGERALD.

Never mind, Miss Glover, we'll stand by you to a man. Lave it to us.

NANCY.

Perhaps we'd better not go on. You see, last night, it seemed like such a good plan, and such

a lark. Four good fellows all in a splendid rivalry to be agreeable. I fancied it would be great fun for you and for me, and for the folks. And now mother and Rita and Sam are furious and I've lost my nerve and you four come in like undertakers and sit about as if you were waiting for some one to die. All right. Go home.

FITZGERALD.

Divil a bit. We're here to stay. The man who goes first is a quitter. And I'll be the last to do that. Sure, there isn't one here that wouldn't be the last to go first. Now cheer up, Miss Glover. 'Tis a good plan. We'll all be used to it in half an hour.

NANCY.

I can foresee all sorts of complications. The neighbors will ask questions. Visitors will wonder why we have taken boarders. The servants will go on strike. The three losers will give the story away and we shall be chaffed forever.

FITZGERALD.

No one shall ever know. It's to be a secret conspiracy. If any one of us turns out to be a bad loser—he's to be put out of the race. That's agreed. Now, let's start in. Who's to have

first chance at the love-making? Seaver, I'll match pennies with ye. [*Searches his pocket.*] No, you toss one up.

NANCY.

Mr. Fitzgerald! Don't make me appear any more ridiculous than I am. There's to be no love-making.

FITZGERALD.

No love-making! Sure, what have we come here for? To sew dresses for the heathen?

NANCY.

No, just to live your natural lives for a month. Could anything be easier than that?

FITZGERALD.

Nothing could be harder, miss, than to live in the same house with you for a month and not make love to you. It's not only hard. It's impossible. You mustn't ask it. If you want us to live our natural lives, you must let us make love to you all the time.

NANCY.

That is quite out of the question. Now, do be sensible. Fancy yourselves my relatives, uncles, grandfathers, anything you like, and simply try to be natural. What's the matter with the rest of you? [*The men have been*

sitting in strained positions ; ROWE soldierly and erect ; SEAVER posed like a Gibson man, but unnaturally motionless ; DEVON nervously crossing and uncrossing his legs, etc.] Mr. Devon, are you ever going to speak ? If you are not going to make yourself perfectly at home, the whole experiment is a failure.

DEVON.

Well, here goes, Nancy.

NANCY.

Mr. Devon !

DEVON.

Bob, if you please.

FITZGERALD.

That's right. Bob or Uncle Bob.

NANCY.

Not Uncle Bob, at any rate.

FITZGERALD.

Plain Bob, then. And I'm Dick, and this is Hamilton or Ham, and the Colonel is——
What is it, Colonel ?

ROWE.

Maynard.

FITZGERALD.

That's more formidable than your last name. Well, take your choice as to the Colonel.

NANCY.

I shall call him Colonel. Why, even if he were a relative, I should call him Colonel.

FITZGERALD.

Ye're hedgin', Nancy, but we'll let it pass. Come on, boys. Lave these things in the hall with our coats and hats and let's go to work.

[All but SEAVER and NANCY exit, centre door.]

SEAVER.

Nancy, why subject yourself to the difficulties and trials of the next month? Why persist in this sacrifice, to what? To a Quixotic desire to be fair. What has fairness to do with love? Isn't the old adage right? I don't know if I am so fortunate as to be the one to whom love has already led you, but if I am, let us be honest, let us end this useless search for what we have already found here and now. I love you, Nancy. No man can love you more than I. No one. And I want to make you happy.

[Enter FITZGERALD, ROWE, DEVON, centre door.]

FITZGERALD.

Ha-ha, me fine bucko ! A flank movement, Colonel, d'ye mind. Into the hall wid ye, and give the next fellow a show. [*Exit SEAYER, with a gesture of impatience, centre door.*] And that's meself. Your pardon, Nancy, for spakin' in the presence of so large an assembly, but I don't know when I can get ye alone again. Don't pay any attention to these chaps, Nancy dear. They're good enough creatures, but what do they know about love ? Love is for the artist and for the beautiful. For you and for me, or rather for me and for you. Your love will inspire me to carve masterpieces that will make the Venus of Milo look like a hatrack. And my love will open all the gates of art and flood our lives with the joy of perfect line and color. Nancy dear, don't throw yourself away on a mere coupon cutter like ayther of these three gentlemen. Marry a poor devil like me that has nothing but a soul and a brush and the clothes on his back, and start on the bottom rung of fortune with him together.

[*Reënter SEAYER, centre door.*]

NANCY.

I'm afraid I can't do that, Dick, without coming down a few rungs myself.

FITZGERALD.

Now, I forgot that. But never mind. We'll give your money to the poor and start in equal.

ROWE.

Come, Dick, this is all against the rules. There were to be no proposals until the end of the month. We've begun the campaign all wrong. It reminds me of the taking of a place in the Philippines, one of those native hills in the interior where I was stationed. I was a captain then. My major said to me——

DEVON.

Hold on, Colonel. Is this going to be a long story ?

ROWE.

Well, the details are very interesting ; Nancy won't mind my going into them, I'm sure. She is very fond of war stories.

NANCY.

Yes. Go on, Colonel.

DEVON.

By all means, go on. But if you don't mind, I'd like to go somewhere and smoke and it won't take me long to finish what I want to say.

ROWE.

I give way, but reserving my rights.

DEVON.

Thank you. Nancy, am I the one you like better than the others?

NANCY.

[*Savagely.*] No!

DEVON.

All right. Where can I go and smoke?

NANCY.

Wherever you please.

DEVON.

Here?

NANCY.

I don't care.

DEVON.

Thanks. As it's the only room I'm familiar with, I prefer to stay here. [*Lights pipe.*] Go on with your story, Colonel.

SEEVER.

Will you excuse me if I write a letter?

NANCY.

Certainly. You are not company. You are one of the family, temporarily.

SEAVER.

Then I shall write.

[He finds pen and ink and paper, sits at the dining table, and writes.]

FITZGERALD.

And by the same token, I'll stretch out on the couch and have a cigarette.

[He does so. DEVON puts his feet on a chair and smokes, reading the paper.]

ROWE.

The major protested because I always stood erect when he gave the order to charge by rushes. The men of course crouched and wriggled and that left me apparently an easy target. However, I had never been wounded, but on this occasion, when we charged the enemy —

NANCY.

[Coughing.] What a horrible pipe.

DEVON.

This? Why, it's the mildest in my collection. That's why I brought it.

NANCY.

Do you smoke much?

DEVON.

Most of the time, while I'm awake.

NANCY.

And always pipes?

DEVON.

Always.

FITZGERALD.

[*On the couch, singing at the top of his voice.*]
Oh, 'twas on a summer mo-o-rning, all in the
month of June.

NANCY.

Dick, shut up. I can't stand those Irish
come-all-yes.

FITZGERALD.

Sure, they're me favorites. I sing scores of
'em every morning.

NANCY.

Every morning?

FITZGERALD.

Every morning.

NANCY.

Can't you make an exception of this morn-
ing? I have a headache.

FITZGERALD.

I'll try to repress myself, darlint, but if I
burst out again, don't blame me.

ROWE.

Well, to proceed with the story of our attack. The Filipinos were hidden behind earthworks at the top of the hill. They were armed with Mauser rifles and well supplied with ammunition as we afterward found, and though they were not the best marksmen in the world, still at a distance of two hundred yards, which would be about a ninth of a mile, they could be depended upon to do effective work. I reconnoitered a bit ——

NANCY.

Have you all had breakfast ?

SEEVER.

Yes, ages ago.

NANCY.

And you, Colonel ?

ROWE.

Oh, yes, indeed. We soldiers are early breakfasters.

NANCY.

Bob, have you eaten ?

DEVON.

[*Behind the paper.*] Eh ? What ?

NANCY.

Do you want anything to eat ?

DEVON.

Not yet. Pretty soon.

NANCY.

And you, Dick ? Have you eaten ?

FITZGERALD.

[*Singing.*]

And divil a word I said to her,
And she said the same to me.

NANCY.

Dick !

FITZGERALD.

Oh, I beg your pardon. Eaten. Let me see.
Well, it makes no difference annyhow. I'll
wait till lunch.

ROWE.

As I was saying, I reconnoitered a bit, and
selected a succession of large rocks as the safest
line of attack for my men.

NANCY.

I wonder where mother and Rita and Sam
are.

RowE.

Perhaps you are not interested.

NANCY.

Oh, yes. Go on. Only I was wondering.

RowE.

We numbered about fifty. The enemy were entirely hidden, but I estimated them at twice as many.

DEVON.

I say, Colonel, that's a dreadfully tiresome tale. Take Nancy into another room, will you, old chap, and let us read in peace.

RowE.

Shall we, Nancy?

NANCY.

No. Not now, please. I'm a little too nervous to listen to the rest of it now. Save it for some quiet evening.

RowE.

Very well. I—I didn't mean to bore you.

NANCY.

Not at all, Colonel. But just to-day.

DEVON.

Just to-day you bore us dreadfully. Save it for a quiet evening, Colonel, when you are all alone.

NANCY.

I thought you wanted to read your paper.

DEVON.

I do.

NANCY.

Why don't you read it then? Where can the folks be?

[Goes to door at right. Comes back and rings for servant.]

SEEVER.

That pipe is unquestionably vile, Bob. The odor depresses me.

[Enter CATHERINE, centre door.]

NANCY.

Catherine, will you tell mother and the rest that our guests have arrived?

[CATHERINE crosses toward right door.]

FITZGERALD.

Wait a bit, Catherine. Sure those eyes and that hair never came from anny place but Belfast. Say, were ye not born in Belfast?

CATHERINE.

Yes, sir.

FITZGERALD.

God bless ye. And how is the old dart?

CATHERINE.

You should know as well as I, sir. I came over a little girl, twelve years ago.

FITZGERALD.

Sure, I'm only here ten years myself. Lord love ye, and yer pretty blue eyes. Did ye know the Fitzgeralds of Gilford Street?

CATHERINE.

My mother's aunt was a cousin of them. But they were fine people.

FITZGERALD.

No finer than yourself, Catherine darlint.

NANCY.

Ahem !

FITZGERALD.

She's me own cousin. Ye didn't know me in Ireland?

CATHERINE.

I knew ye well, then. Wasn't I in the crowd that saw ye off for France when ye went away

to learn how to paint pictures? Only I was a poor little lass and ye were the rich Fitzgerald's boy.

FITZGERALD.

Well, then, ye'd laugh yerself sick to know what the rich Fitzgerald left his only son—ha-ha—his blessing and a picture of Dan'l O'Connell.

CATHERINE.

Who got the rest?

FITZGERALD.

There wasn't any rest. The owld gentleman tried to make monkies of the bulls and bears on the stock exchange and they made ducks and drakes of his money.

CATHERINE.

Ye can tell me about it later. I must be doin' me work now.

FITZGERALD.

Well, don't be forgettin' me. Oh, manny's the long chat we'll have before the month is over. [*Exit CATHERINE, right door.*] You don't mind if I talk to me cousin now and then, Nancy?

NANCY.

Certainly not. You may spend as much time in the kitchen as you please. We allow Catherine to have a reasonable amount of company. You may have a policeman or a grocer's clerk by way of rivals, but no doubt you can outshine them.

FITZGERALD.

Nancy, you wouldn't have me neglectin' me own cousin, and she from Belfast. Why, Lord love ye, I was only tryin' to cheer her up a bit.

DEVON.

He wasn't making love to her, Nancy. That's only a way he's got.

FITZGERALD.

Is it love-makin' ye think I was? That love-makin'? Wait till we're alone, Nancy dear, and I'll show you what I call love-makin'. And then you'll see the difference between pink lemonade and Irish potheen fresh from the still.

NANCY.

Gentlemen, I am afraid I have been rash, thoughtless, foolish. I must ask you to forgive me for this wild enterprise. I see already that no good can come of it. Let us end it now.

We can part good friends, and take up our lives where we left them last night.

DEVON.

You can't put us out like that, Nancy. We came here by your invitation. Your family know we are here for a month, and in order to get us out before then you must go to Court and swear out a—a—mandamus, or an injunction, or something like that. When do you serve lunch?

NANCY.

I hate you. I hate all of you. I shall never marry any one of you. I shall never marry at all, not if you stay here thirty years. You may hold me to my invitation if you like, but it will do you no good, understand that.

DEVON.

You hate us all equally?

NANCY.

Yes.

DEVON.

Good. That makes it fair.

NANCY.

Here comes mother and the rest. For the last time, will you please go home?

THE FOUR MEN.

No!

[Enter MRS. GLOVER and RITA, right door. They are elaborately dressed in contrast to their former condition and have adopted a "company" manner, thinly veiling their indignation. RITA'S red and shiny nose is eclipsed by generous applications of a powder rag which she carries with her, and uses furtively from time to time. The men stand up.]

MRS. GLOVER.

Good—*[coughs]* good—*[coughs]* good-morning. *[Continues coughing. RITA joins.]*

NANCY.

You have all met my mother, and my sister Rita.

DEVON.

Sorry to find you suffering, Mrs. Glover. Bad cold you've got, you and Rita.

RITA.

It isn't a cold, Bob Devon. It's that—*[coughs]* that pipe.

DEVON.

Oh! I beg your pardon, but Nancy said we were to make ourselves perfectly at home—and we did.

MRS. GLOVER.

Please do. Since Nancy insists on this somewhat unusual arrangement, let us carry it out logically. Let us be perfectly normal, just as if nothing had happened.

ROWE.

We don't want to interfere with your duties or programs. Please not to put yourselves out. No entertainments or entertaining, or formality.

MRS. GLOVER.

Exactly what I was about to suggest. Let us dress comfortably, just as we are, and spend the day as we otherwise should.

FITZGERALD.

In fact, I was thinking we could dress even more comfortably.

MRS. GLOVER.

Yes. Take off your cuffs. Change your shoes for slippers. As for Nancy and Rita and myself, you see we go about quite simply, quite as we were before you came.

DEVON.

That's right. And may we keep on smoking ?

RITA.

Oh, I dare say we shall get used to it.

MRS. GLOVER.

Now, the first thing to consider is lunch, and incidentally we may as well consider the digestive possibilities of our guests. The probationary period is to last a month, I understand, and in that time the seeds of appendicitis or dyspepsia or all sorts of diseases may be sown. Mr. Fitzgerald, what dishes do you prefer, and what do you abhor ?

FITZGERALD.

Dick is me name. We're to call each other by Christian names. Oh, not you, ma'am. You are Mrs. Glover, or mother, just as you prefer.

MRS. GLOVER.

Mother is a little premature. Mrs. Glover will do.

FITZGERALD.

And the Colonel has such a dignified first name that we've allowed him to keep his title.

MRS. GLOVER.

Well, Dick, what is your favorite dish ?

FITZGERALD.

Oh, anything at all, as the fellow said, so long as it's corned beef and cabbage.

MRS. GLOVER.

And yours, Colonel ?

ROWE.

Simple fare, Mrs. Glover. Soldiers are not fastidious. Why, during the Spanish campaign we ate beef which ought in all reason to have poisoned us, but none of us knew it until we read it in the papers. One day at San Juan, the quartermaster said to my Colonel—I was a lieutenant then ——

DEVON.

If there's one thing I hate, it's corned beef and cabbage. The very smell of it drives me crazy. If Dick wants it, let him eat it in the kitchen.

FITZGERALD.

'Tis a dish fit for a king ! Don't mind him, Mrs. Glover. Or give him a bale of hay, and he'll be quiet.

RITA.

[*Who has been talking in dumb show with SEAVER.*] Mr. Seaver is on a diet, mother. He can't eat sweet things.

SEEVER.

Nor greasy things —

RITA.

Nor starchy things —

SEEVER.

Nor red meats —

RITA.

Nor anything boiled —

SEEVER.

Nor anything fried —

RITA.

Nor liquor —

SEEVER.

Nor cheese —

RITA.

Nor game —

SEEVER.

Nor pork —

RITA.

Nor corned beef —

DEVON.

Nor cabbage. It's like the house that Jack built.

FITZGERALD.

[*Savagely.*] You can eat most annything but food, can't you, Ham?

DEVON.

Anything but food and corned beef and cabbage.

MRS. GLOVER.

It's quite a problem. We must consult Catherine.

[*Rings for her. Enter CATHERINE, centre door.*

NANCY.

Now, I shouldn't for anything want to endanger the health of you four men by forcing you to conform to our customary menu, and as it seems impossible to reconcile your tastes, I am quite willing to abandon the probation test. You may all go home if you like, and allow our fate to work itself out along other lines.

FITZGERALD.

Miss Nancy, we don't wish to trespass upon your hospitality, but I think I may speak for my three associates here and say that we are determined men. Short of a positive order to leave the house we shall stay here thirty days. It's a most sensible method of settling a great question. Every man of us feels that he is bet-

ter qualified than the others for the great honor of your hand. Every man feels that the better you know him, the more certain you will be that he is the companion soul that was made for you ages before the world began. To withdraw now means to leave the choice to accident, impulse or whim. We, the united order of would-be husbands, humbly petition you, the founder of our order, to let the fight go on to a finish.

NANCY.

But we have already failed. The food question, for instance. Here's Dick, who must have corned beef and cabbage against the protest of all the others. Now, the cook won't make separate dinners for each of you —

CATHERINE.

If you please, miss, I just know how Mr. Fitzgerald likes his dish, Belfast style, and I'll be proud and happy to prepare it without anny trouble to the cook.

FITZGERALD.

'Tis an angel ye are.

NANCY.

But there's Hamilton Seaver. He's on a diet. I didn't know that. He must have special preparations. The cook is so sensitive, mother. You know, we can't ask her to make invalid's dishes.

RITA.

Mr. Seaver has been explaining his dieting system to me. I think it most admirable, and I'm going to try it myself. Most of the dishes he eats are uncooked like oats, and fruit, and milk. It will be great fun for us two, getting up our own meals together. So you see the cook won't be bothered by us either.

NANCY.

There are other objections. The Colonel is an early riser, and an early breakfaster like old soldiers. We can't make him wait two or three hours for the rest of us, and cook won't serve breakfast until after eight.

MRS. GLOVER.

Now, Nancy, you know it is impossible for me to sleep after five o'clock. I wander about the house in the early morning like a lost soul. It will be a real comfort for me to cook a simple breakfast for the Colonel while I am puttering about.

ROWE.

You are very kind, Mrs. Glover.

NANCY.

And Bob Devon won't be able to stand it here without his terrible pipes. And I absolutely refuse to let him smoke a pipe in this house.

DEVON.

Not even a new pipe?

NANCY.

No pipe whatever.

DEVON.

I'll go down cellar.

NANCY.

You shall not smoke a pipe in this house.

DEVON.

All right. I'll smoke cigars.

[Takes one out.]

RITA.

Do you know, I was a bit put out at first, but now I'm sure we shall be perfectly jolly.

MRS. GLOVER.

How wonderfully we adjust ourselves to new circumstances. Now, everything is settled. I must give cook an outline of the arrangements.

RITA.

I'll go along and get the oatmeal ready for lunch for Hamilton and me.

MRS. GLOVER.

Catherine, I shall need your influence with Norah in case of rebellion.

CATHERINE.

I'll answer for Norah. She's not far from Belfast herself, and when she learns there's a Belfast gentleman in the house, nothing will be too much for her.

[*Exeunt* MRS. GLOVER, RITA and CATHERINE, *left door*.]

FITZGERALD.

D'ye see now, we'll be no more bother to ye than a breeze in May. Barely here an hour, and almost perfect harmony already.

NANCY.

Well, really, the friction has disappeared in a most wonderful way. Mother and Rita were ready to disown me when I announced your visit this morning, and now they are almost enthusiastic over it.

FITZGERALD.

Ye were nervous. Ye were afraid it wouldn't come out all right. And it couldn't be better. Sure, we'll all get along like turtle doves.

DEVON.

It's lucky real turtle doves can't sing Irish come-all-yes.

FITZGERALD.

If they could, there would be no finer burd on earth.

DEVON.

That's a matter of opinion. We'll see what the rest think about it. All those in favor of Dick not singing say aye.

ALL.

Aye.

DEVON.

There you are, Dick.

FITZGERALD.

What do you know about music? A pack of omadhauns, pipe suckers, tin soldiers, dyspeptics.

NANCY.

Dick!

SEAVER.

I am not a dyspeptic. I am a rational feeder. Every one wasn't brought up on corned beef and cabbage, like a carnivorous beast.

FITZGERALD.

A carnivorous beast. Did you hear him call me a carnivorous beast, Colonel?

ROWE.

Yes, and I heard you call me a tin soldier. I'll have you know, sir, that I have served my country in fourteen engagements.

FITZGERALD.

Fourteen engagements and never married.
Look out for him, Nancy.

ROWE.

And I resent any attack upon my record by
a man who has never smelled powder except in
a ballroom.

FITZGERALD.

Can't ye take a joke, man ?

ROWE.

Not a joke of that kind. No, sir ; I demand
an apology.

FITZGERALD.

Go to the devil. There's an Irish apology for
you.

ROWE.

You shall answer to me, sir.

FITZGERALD.

An Irishman never yet owed an answer.

DEVON.

You've got no business to talk to the Colonel
like that, Fitzgerald. Respect his gray hairs.

ROWE. ,

My gray hairs. I have no gray hairs. I'm as young—as young as many a younger man. I'm good for a dozen pampered youths of to-day. I can ride as long in the saddle as a boy, eat like a boy, eat anything, not merely corned beef and cabbage——

DEVON.

Or oats ——

ROWE.

Or oats.

SEAVER.

It's none of your business what I eat. And as a matter of fact, your hair, what's left of it, would be gray if you let it alone, and didn't dye it, you silly old goose.

NANCY.

Gentlemen !

SEAVER.

Why did he begin with me ?

ROWE.

I didn't.

DEVON.

No. You said you respected his gray hairs, Seaver.

SEAVER.

Well, he called me a dyspeptic first.

DEVON.

It was Dick who did that.

ROWE.

And he called me a tin soldier.

DEVON.

But you objected to his singing first.

ROWE.

Not until he had done something to start the row. I can't think what.

FITZGERALD.

Well, I can finish annything I start and annybody. No mushroom Colonel can play Filipino with me.

[All the men are talking loudly and excitedly, except DEVON. A noise of frightened women's voices is heard behind the left door, then a crash. NANCY rushes out left door, followed by DEVON. The others do not see them, and go on quarreling. Cries behind left door. "Fire! Help!"

SEAVER.

Oh, I say, Fitzgerald, this is going too far. You may have intended your first fling as a

joke, but the Colonel doesn't have to adopt your sense of humor. Your whole conduct is in execrable taste.

FITZGERALD.

Well, it makes me angry when I say something in fun and the other fellow gets angry.

ROWE.

If you assure me that your slurs were intended to be humorous, I shall reconsider some of my remarks.

FITZGERALD.

To be sure they were humorous. I'm always humorous except when some one makes me mad.

ROWE.

Then I withdraw my language to you.

FITZGERALD.

And I withdraw all I said that disagrees with you, sir.

SEEVER.

I take it the amende includes all of us, though Bob can speak for himself. Where is he?

FITZGERALD.

And where is Nancy?

ROWE.

They must have left the room.

[*Enter DEVON, much disheveled and blackened, carrying NANCY and followed by RITA and CATHERINE, the last two supporting MRS. GLOVER. All bear marks of the fire and excitement.*

FITZGERALD.

What's all this?

RITA.

Nothing except that there has been a fire. Somebody spilled fat on the stove and it blazed up, lighted some cloths and spread all over the kitchen. We screamed for help and Nancy and Bob came in. Why you gentlemen didn't follow I leave you to explain. Perhaps you didn't want to interrupt your joint debate, or maybe you didn't care to singe your eyelashes. At any rate, if it hadn't been for Mr. Devon, we should probably all be dead. He put the fire out and saved Nancy just as the flames caught her.

NANCY.

[*Half conscious and moaning.*] My hero.

DEVON.

My darling.

SEAYER.

I guess this settles it. We have no chance now. Shall we give up?

FITZGERALD.

Begorry, no! I'll stick the month out if it takes a year. While there's life there's hope. Devon's got the advantage now, but there's manny a slip. I'll stay!

SEAYER.

Then so will I.

ROWE.

And I!

DEVON.

[*Still holding NANCY in his arms.*] My love.
My own.

CURTAIN

THE SECOND ACT

SCENE.—*The music-room. Piano. Doors right, left and center. SEAVER, ROWE and FITZGERALD lounging about after supper.*

ROWE.

Well, to-morrow it will be all over. At eleven o'clock the thirty days will expire and the contest will be decided.

SEAVER.

Or, let us be perfectly frank and admit that it is practically decided now.

FITZGERALD.

No, sir. Never say die. Bob Devon has had it all his way since the fire, but if another stroke of luck gave one of us a chance to make a rescue, or play the hero, the whole order might be reversed before to-morrow morning.

ROWE.

Bob has entrenched his position too strongly. It is almost impregnable.

FITZGERALD.

You don't know women, Colonel. As a matter of fact our chances were never so good. The least accident will turn the scales. Haven't you noticed that Nancy is not happy?

SEAVER.

That's because we've lain down. Nancy can stand anything but indifference. She wants to keep us all on the anxious seat and she observes that we're not. She hates to give Bob the satisfaction of thinking he's got a walk-over, and she hates the idea of losing her hold on us. Take it from me, there's a mine under Bob Devon that only needs a match to blow him—puff! If you chaps are still in the fight, be on the *qui vive* to-night. Watch your chance to jump in and meanwhile treat Nancy with disdain. Act as if you didn't care to win anyway. And mark my words, before the thirty days expire at eleven to-morrow Bob Devon will grin on the other side of his face.

ROWE.

There is much truth in what you say, Dick. Bob has lost some of his confidence and Nancy is decidedly piqued at our seeming neglect. Bob is a good fellow. If he's to get the prize, so be it, but in the interests of good sport, he should not be allowed to walk away with it.

We must unite against the common enemy. Fitzgerald's scheme is a good one. Treat her with indifference and watch for an opening. Do you agree, Seaver?

SEAVER.

Perfectly. It is rather galling to see Bob win out by a pure accident, especially when there is reason to believe that he was not the original favorite.

FITZGERALD.

Why, didn't the lady herself say that? Bob was not the man she preferred at first.

ROWE.

True. Well, then, one last rally and may the best man win. The evening is young and the morrow is still far off.

[*Enter DEVON, right door.*]

DEVON.

Well, what's the program to-night?

FITZGERALD.

The same as usual, I suppose. Music, cards, dolly dialogues, and all the other furious debauchery of the domestic hearth. At nine o'clock the Colonel will fall asleep in his chair and Seaver will read the society news with Rita.

SEAVER.

And you, Dick, will go into the kitchen and sing Hibernian melodies to the cook and Catherine, while Bob sits up and holds hands with Nancy.

DEVON.

All for the twenty-ninth time. Are we to have no special exercises for the last evening of our imprisonment in Paradise?

FITZGERALD.

The special exercises will come to-morrow at eleven.

DEVON.

I'm sorry for you boys. But it's been a pleasant experience on the whole. When Nancy and I are married you must all come and see us often and talk over the curiosities of the contest. Come to dinner any time. Nancy and I will always make you welcome.

FITZGERALD.

Is it all settled? Has she accepted you definitely?

DEVON.

No. That wouldn't be fair. There was to be no decision until to-morrow. But between you and me, if you can find any one who wants

to bet that I won't win out, give him long odds. I'm backing myself to the limit.

SEEVER.

Be careful, Bob. Over-confidence loses many a fight.

DEVON.

So does the lack of confidence. But you wait and see. And in anticipation of my view of the outcome, I want to thank you all for your chivalry and good fellowship during the past four weeks. I appreciate deeply —

FITZGERALD.

Hold on. Don't start your funeral oration till you're sure the corpse is dead.

DEVON.

Now let's be good-natured to the end. Where are the ladies ?

ROWE.

In their rooms, writing letters.

DEVON.

And Sam ?

SEEVER.

Making a call. He's the only man of us that dares to spend an evening out of the house.

DEVON.

Far as I'm concerned, I'm willing to stay in every evening for the rest of my life.

FITZGERALD.

It's not been so bad, but I would like to spend one Sunday morning in a dressing-gown, and this month has been a terrible strain on my lingerie.

SEEVER.

I'm going up to see if Rita will let me take one of her books away with me to-morrow. I haven't quite finished with it.

[Exit SEEVER, right door.]

DEVON.

Oh, Colonel, Mrs. Glover asked me to tell you that — Hello, he's asleep again.

FITZGERALD.

The poor old Colonel. To-morrow night he can doze to his heart's content from supper to breakfast. He must be fifty if he's a day.

DEVON.

Who would think it? I'm sure he looks as young as you, Fitz.

FITZGERALD.

He does. But I'll never look a bit older myself. Art is the great thing for keepin' a man

young. Or a woman either. Even the artists' models seem to have drunk from the fountain of perpetual youth. Here. [*Taking photographs from his pocket.*] Would ye think this one had a husband and grown-up children?

DEVON.

They don't dress her very elaborately, do they?

FITZGERALD.

She's posing as Spring.

DEVON.

Early March, to judge by the foliage.

FITZGERALD.

She might pass for twenty. She's thirty-five. And here's her sister.

DEVON.

I thought so. They dress so much alike. No. This one has only one scarf. The other has two.

FITZGERALD.

That's a study of Autumn. Here's Summer.

DEVON.

I don't notice much change in the styles.

FITZGERALD.

The model that posed for Summer is thirty-six years old. And here is Winter.

DEVON.

In Florida?

FITZGERALD.

Winter is forty.

DEVON.

They may be purely conventional representations of the four seasons; to a sculptor no more improper than landscapes, but to a common three-by-six policeman they might look like nothing but four unconventional young women somewhat less than half-clothed. Why do you carry them about with you?

FITZGERALD.

To study them, of course. That's what models are for. Every curve and point must be as familiar to the sculptor as his alphabet. There's no time to get it all from the life. I must have photographs, anatomical charts, everything that can help me to grow familiar with the human form.

DEVON.

Well, I'm sure I don't mind if nobody else does. All the same —

[DEVON *is looking at the photos at left.*

FITZGERALD is standing at right, with the whole stage between them. Enter NANCY, right door ; sees FITZGERALD first. DEVON sees NANCY and hastily puts the photos into his pocket.

NANCY.

Dick, I meant to ask about the statue competition. Have you heard from it yet ?

FITZGERALD.

No, but I will soon. With the luck I've had lately I expect to get a polite note from the judges like this : "The committee thanks Mr. Fitzgerald for submitting his group, and suggests that it might make a very fine paper-weight. The prize has been awarded to Mr. Doughhead for his conception of four angels whose wings conform to the latest discoveries in aerial navigation."

NANCY.

I hope not. Indeed, something tells me you will win.

FITZGERALD.

Thank you.

NANCY.

Shall we make up a hand at whist ?

FITZGERALD.

If you'll excuse me, I'd rather not play. Play two-handed pinochle with Devon.

NANCY.

Oh, we can still have our game with a dummy to take your place. Can't we, Colonel?

ROWE.

[*Waking up.*] Eh? What?

NANCY.

I say, Dick, and you and I can make up a whist party, can't we?

ROWE.

Eh, really, I should be charmed. But I am behind several days in my "Memoirs of the War in the Philippines." I can't neglect them any longer.

FITZGERALD.

Come on, Colonel. I'll sit in your room and smoke while you write.

ROWE.

[*To NANCY.*] You will pardon us?

NANCY.

[*Stiffly.*] Certainly. [*Exeunt FITZGERALD and ROWE left door, arm in arm.*] What were you talking about before I came in?

DEVON.

Why?

NANCY.

You seemed to stop. What was it?

DEVON.

Oh, just remarking that to-night is the last one.

NANCY.

So it is.

DEVON.

And to-morrow we shall know whether we go up to heaven or down to work, as usual.

NANCY.

You don't seem to take the alternative very seriously.

DEVON.

I wish I could make you feel how serious it is to me. That's where the confounded American sense of humor handicaps me. I feel as sentimental as a singing Italian, or a poetical German, or a hysterical Frenchman, but if I were to sing or recite poetry or froth at the mouth, you would ring for an ambulance, wouldn't you? And still when to-morrow rolls around, it will find me more nervous and shaky

and anxious than if I were being tried for murder. There's one thing I want you to know, Nancy, whether you ever marry me or not, that it makes no difference whether you marry me or not.

NANCY.

Oh, doesn't it?

DEVON.

No. I shall keep on loving you just as much, just as long. You won't find me bobbing up next day with another pretty girl on my arm. No, sir. I'm done. [*A ring at the door-bell.*]

NANCY.

Mercy. Who can that be?

[*Enter CATHERINE.*]

CATHERINE.

A note for Mr. Devon. There's a boy waiting for an answer. [*DEVON takes the note.*]

DEVON.

You will excuse me?

NANCY.

Certainly.

[*DEVON reads the note with a developing frown of impatience and perplexity.*]

DEVON.

Tell the boy to come in.

NANCY.

Is it bad news?

DEVON.

Well, yes, rather.

NANCY.

Oh, very serious?

DEVON.

No. Doesn't affect me at all, in fact. Bad news for somebody else. [*Enter BOY.*] Tell them—er—it—er—— Why did you bring it up here? Why didn't they send it to my office before I left? [*Exit CATHERINE.*]

BOY.

Lady did send me to your office, but you wasn't there. I went back and told her, and she said to go out and find where you was. I hustles back and the elevator man tells me where you lives, and I hikes for there, and they tells me you ain't home, you're here, and there you are.

DEVON.

Yes, yes. Tell them—her—tell her I—tell her it's all right. Tell her not to worry—it—it's all right—tell her I—I can't—tell her it's all

right—tell her—tell her—— Wait a minute, I'll give you a note. [*Writes a short note, seals it in envelope, gives it to BOY with a coin.*] There, give her that.

BOY.

Yessir. Thanks.

[*Exit BOY.*]

DEVON.

Isn't it annoying to have business matters come up after business hours?

NANCY.

Depends upon nature of the business, doesn't it?

DEVON.

I—I wonder if I might be excused for an hour or two, long enough to straighten this out.

NANCY.

You are not a prisoner, Mr. Devon.

DEVON.

No, but without—without losing any of my rights, as it were?

NANCY.

What rights?

DEVON.

I don't mean rights, I mean advantages.

NANCY.

Advantage over whom ?

DEVON.

Over nobody in particular. I don't claim to have the advantage over the others. Just advantage in general, opportunity if you prefer. Will I sacrifice anything if I go out for a few minutes ?

NANCY.

That is for you to decide.

DEVON.

Now, Nancy, please be less oracular. Do you mind if I attend a very pressing call ?

NANCY.

I shouldn't for anything want you to disappoint a lady who seems to have so urgent a claim upon you.

DEVON.

Thank you, Nancy. It is—it is very important. Awfully kind of you not to mind. I'll be back very shortly.

NANCY.

Pray don't hurry on my account. Indeed there is really no need for you to come back at all. It's so near the end of the thirty days you

may as well go straight to your own home. We can send your bag by a servant to-morrow. He will tell you the result of the experiment.

DEVON.

Nancy! What in the world—— Surely you don't mean to put me out of the race like this.

NANCY.

On the contrary you are putting yourself out.

DEVON.

Me?

NANCY.

Isn't it a pretty good indication of the state of your feelings that a mere matter of business should make you willing to forego the last, the most critical evening of all the month. I'm not going to throw myself at any one's head, you know.

DEVON.

Nancy! Don't be unreasonable. You won't change your mind at the last hour, will you?

NANCY.

You assume that I have made up my mind in your favor?

DEVON.

No. Not that. But whatever you have decided to do, my keeping a pure business engagement ought not to influence you.

NANCY.

How queer ! I didn't know your law practice was so strenuous. I thought your office down town was a leisurely sort of thing, devoted principally to conducting the investment of your own property.

DEVON.

Why, so it is.

NANCY.

And now suddenly you develop an extraordinary case requiring you to call on a lady in the evening. Is it going to be a criminal proceeding ?

DEVON.

What, my call on the lady ?

NANCY.

Oh, no ! The matter in which she is retaining you.

DEVON.

Certainly not.

NANCY.

A divorce, then ?

DEVON.

No, I don't take divorce cases. This isn't really a case at all. It's a—a sort of a personal private affair.

NANCY.

Indeed!

DEVON.

Yes.

NANCY.

You are frank at least. A personal private affair.

DEVON.

Now, don't misunderstand me, Nancy. It is personal and private, but it's business just the same. Do I make myself clear?

NANCY.

Clear enough for the present purpose.

DEVON.

And you don't care if I go?

NANCY.

No, indeed. On the contrary I prefer that you should.

DEVON.

Oh, I say now. That doesn't sound right.

NANCY.

Sounds just as right as a private business matter with a lady who seems to have more attraction for you than—than—oh, please run right along, Mr. Devon.

DEVON.

Let me explain exactly what the situation is. This lady is a very old friend of mine.

NANCY.

A very old lady?

DEVON.

No. A young lady, youngish, that is. She—she has claims upon my friendship.

NANCY.

Oh!

DEVON.

Yes. Claims which I am bound to recognize. I—I can't go into details about it, because there are confidences, you know, which I can't reveal.

NANCY.

Professional confidences?

DEVON.

In a way, yes. She has just learned some facts of very great importance to her, and as she has

claims upon my friendship she asks me to call and see her at once, and so I've got to go. There. I haven't gone into the situation fully, but you see my position.

NANCY.

Yes. I see that.

DEVON.

I'd tell you just what the facts are that she has learned, but you wouldn't want me to break confidences, would you?

NANCY.

No.

DEVON.

Personally I'd just as lief give you the whole story, but it wouldn't be treating the lady right, would it?

NANCY

Of course not.

DEVON.

But you can imagine the rest, can't you? You can easily invent a set of circumstances which would absolutely require my presence.

NANCY.

Oh, yes, quite easily.

DEVON.

You may assume that she has a chance to buy something at a low figure, real estate for instance, and that she must decide at once, and she wants my judgment as to whether it would be a good bargain or not.

NANCY.

That isn't a very good supposition, because she could talk to you over the telephone. Besides a chance to buy real estate would probably last until morning. No. I can make up a better one.

DEVON.

Let's hear it.

NANCY.

The news she has heard is a rumor that you are going to be engaged, and as she has strong claims on you she threatens to sue you for breach of promise unless you come to terms this evening.

DEVON.

Nancy. You don't think that!

NANCY.

One hypothesis is as good as another.

DEVON.

But it isn't true. It's—it's preposterous.

NANCY.

What is true, then? You don't expect me to make presumptions in your favor when you appear so anxious to conceal the truth.

DEVON.

I'm not concealing it because I'm afraid, but because I have no right to reveal it. It's a confidence.

NANCY.

Oh, very well. If I can't be trusted with the information that one of your acquaintances intends to buy a piece of property, or owes her dressmaker, or some similar weighty circumstance, you'd better not have anything more to do with me. Good-evening.

DEVON.

It's no petty property matter, or suit, or anything like that, I tell you. It's a very vital secret, something she wouldn't have any one know for the world. I'd be a cad if I told.

NANCY.

You can tell without giving names.

DEVON.

Yes. I can do that. I hate to because you might identify her by the particulars. But I will if you insist.

NANCY.

No. That won't satisfy me either. You might treat me to another invention; one more plausible.

DEVON.

Nancy, have I ever lied to you?

NANCY.

No, but you never had so much provocation. I've got it. Show me her note. The one she just sent you. I can tell from the general style if from nothing else what the nature of the business is.

DEVON.

Her name is signed to it.

NANCY.

I'll allow you to hold your finger over the name

DEVON.

But—but ——

NANCY.

Yes or no?

DEVON.

Wait. I'm trying to recall what she says in it.

NANCY.

Aha! Good-night.

[Turns to go.

DEVON.

Hold on. Here it is. I only want to be sure that no names are mentioned in the body of it. I don't think there are. I'll take a chance. Go ahead. [*Fumbles in his pockets and produces the letter. Places it on the table. NANCY comes over.*] There, let me read it to you. "My dear Bob: Why didn't you tell me how serious matters were? If you have any regard, any pity for me, come to me. At once, at once, or I shall do something desperate." You see! That's all.

NANCY.

And quite enough. No wonder you hesitated to let me look.

DEVON.

I didn't hesitate. Why should I? What was there to hide? [*Reading note aloud again.*] "My dear Bob: Why didn't you let me know how serious matters were? If you have any regard, any pity for me, come to me at once, at once, or I shall do something desperate." She simply—— Oh, hang it, can't you read between the lines? Isn't it obvious what she is alluding to?

NANCY.

Perfectly obvious. By all means, go to her.

DEVON.

I—I'm afraid she really means it. She's quite madly in love——

NANCY.

Go—go—go!

DEVON.

What's the matter?

NANCY.

Nothing. Please relieve beauty in distress before she does anything desperate.

DEVON.

But what are you making a fuss about?

NANCY.

My head aches. I'm going up to my room to lie down.

DEVON.

I'm sorry. But while you are having your nap I can go and return.

NANCY.

You can go and not return.

DEVON.

Not return? Why not?

NANCY.

Because it won't do you any good to return.

DEVON.

You bewilder me. I can't make you out. Of course if my going makes so much difference I shall stay.

NANCY.

I don't think it will make any material difference now. If you go I shall never speak to you again; if you stay it will only be to witness your own humiliation to-morrow morning.

DEVON.

Nancy, what has come over you?

NANCY.

And, anyway, I shall spend the evening in my room.

DEVON.

I can't see for the life of me.

NANCY.

I refuse to discuss the subject any farther.

[*Enter SEAVER and RITA, right door.*]

RITA.

Oh, are you here? We thought you and Bob were in the library.

NANCY.

Why?

RITA.

Oh, you and he have acquired the library by prescriptive right, as it were, just as Hamilton and I have preëmpted this room.

NANCY.

Have I forfeited my rights to this room, then? Am I a trespasser?

RITA.

Why, you can stay here if you like.

NANCY.

Thank you.

RITA.

Then Hamilton and I can take the library for a change.

NANCY.

Why can't you take the library and Mr. Devon for a change?

RITA.

I—I suppose I could, but I thought Bob Devon was going to stay here.

NANCY.

No. I am remaining here and Mr. Devon is not.

RITA.

What's wrong, Bob?

DEVON.

N-nothing.

NANCY.

I'm afraid I've been very selfish, Hamilton.

SEEVER.

How?

NANCY.

Neglecting you and—leaving you to 'find your own amusement.

SEEVER.

I haven't minded it at all, really I haven't.

NANCY.

It's rather late in the day to reform, but let me try. I'm going to give this evening up to you.

SEEVER.

Now, don't put yourself out on my account. I'm perfectly comfortable and happy.

DEVON.

You said you had a headache or something. Hadn't you better lie down a bit as you proposed?

SEAVER.

You do look a bit played out, honestly. I should recommend a nap.

NANCY.

I'm not played out a bit. I don't want a nap. There isn't a wink of sleep in me. Sit down, Hamilton, and tell me about Mrs. Laval-lee's dance. I didn't go, and I've never had a proper account of it.

SEAVER.

Quite an ordinary affair, I assure you.

[*Glances at RITA as if impatient to get away.*]

NANCY.

How was everybody dressed? What were the favors?

SEAVER.

Positively I can't remember. It was ages ago, you know. Six or seven weeks.

DEVON.

I was there. The favors were —

NANCY.

Are you still here? Rita, take him up to the library and show him those old Bibles.

RITA.

I will not. Show him yourself.

NANCY.

Mr. Devon, go up and look at the Bibles. They are on the top shelf at the left, over the door. Rita will join you later.

DEVON.

I don't feel quite up to the Bibles, but if you insist ——

NANCY.

Why, no. Perhaps you don't care to remain indoors at all. You needn't unless you like.

SEEVER.

But it's against the rules to go out evenings. Not that I object but I'm surprised to find you letting down the bars.

NANCY.

Mr. Devon is a privileged person. He has nothing to lose by disobeying the rules.

SEEVER.

Oh!

NANCY.

So take your choice, Bibles, social calls, anything you like, Mr. Devon.

DEVON.

I'll make it Bibles.

[*Exit* DEVON.]

SEAVER.

What's happened with you and Bob? Had a tiff?

NANCY.

No.

SEAVER.

Then why do you call him Mr. Devon and send him off and all that?

NANCY.

He bores me sometimes. I've been seeing too much of him and too little of—others.

SEAVER.

Really—I had an idea—that Bob was—was rather high man.

NANCY.

I can't help it if he is allowed to monopolize my time.

SEAVER.

Oh, I say. If the fellows had known a little earlier how you felt about it.

NANCY.

Well, they know now, at least one of them does, and it's never too late to learn.

SEEVER.

By Jove —

NANCY.

Rita, you left my magazine in the dining-room. Would you mind getting it for me?

RITA.

You can get it yourself, or ring for some one.

SEEVER.

Don't trouble. Let me go. Which one was it?

RITA.

The *Century*. On the Morris chair.

SEEVER.

Back in a moment.

[*Exit SEEVER, right door.*]

RITA.

Nancy Glover, I think you're a horrid, selfish, greedy, envious, jealous pig.

NANCY.

Wherefore, sister dear?

RITA.

Because you want to capture everything in sight like Alexander and Brigham Young and Lucrezia Borgia in one.

57882

NANCY.

Let me remind you that as to Hamilton Seaver, he and I are half engaged.

RITA.

Half engaged. You haven't promised to accept him?

NANCY.

I said half engaged. If I had promised to accept him, we would be wholly engaged.

RITA.

Then ——

NANCY.

He has asked me to marry him, hasn't he? And I haven't given him my answer, have I? That makes us half engaged, doesn't it?

RITA.

In a way, yes, but ——

NANCY.

But me no buts, and remember that it is very improper to flirt with a man who is half engaged to some one else, especially if the some one else is your sister.

RITA.

How can you be half engaged, as you call it, to four men at once? It's absurd; socially and mathematically absurd.

NANCY.

I am just the same, and you keep your hands off.

RITA.

I shall do nothing of the kind. You are trying to create a monopoly and monopolies are illegal. I could have you arrested. Not that I care a straw about Hamilton Seaver, except just as a friend and guest, but my sense of justice is outraged. I object to the principle of it.

[*Reënter* SEAVER.]

SEAVER.

I found it under the newspapers. Some one must have mislaid it.

NANCY.

Thank you, Hamilton. Have you read the article about the Empress Dowager of China?

SEAVER.

No.

NANCY.

It's really very good. So I've been told. I wanted so much to read it to-night. But my head aches dreadfully and so do my eyes.

SEAVER.

I'm sorry. Can I do anything?

NANCY.

If—if you really want to—you might read the article aloud. I think it would be restful. But not unless you really want to.

SEEVER.

Why, of course. I should like to very much.

NANCY.

You don't have to read continuously. You can stop now and then for a little chat. That is, if you care to.

SEEVER.

It will be jolly.

NANCY.

Sit in the big armchair. I will curl up on the rug. You know my weakness for occupying the floor.

RITA.

And the lime-light.

NANCY.

I beg your pardon.

RITA.

Nancy, do you mean to tell me in your sober senses that you are going to ask Hamilton to read an article about the Dowager Empress of China?

NANCY.

Why not ?

RITA.

Well, if Hamilton is too polite to tell you that the Dowager Empress of China is a bore, and that you are another, I'll say it for him.

NANCY.

Do you feel that way about it, Hamilton ?

SEAYER.

No, that is, not at all.

NANCY.

Because if you are not interested in the Empress, there are several other splendid contributions. One about the latest plays, if you prefer it.

SEAYER.

Whatever you like. It's quite immaterial.

NANCY.

Oh, read about the plays.

SEAYER.

Very well.

[Sits in easy chair.]

RITA.

Oh, pshaw !

NANCY.

Don't you like reading aloud ?

RITA.

I think it's perfectly stupid, the most tiresome practice ever invented. And reading aloud from a magazine—frightful.

NANCY.

Then run along somewhere else, my dear. Play the piano, or go into the library with Bob Devon.

RITA.

Thank you. I prefer magazines to ancient Bibles.

NANCY.

Then at least be still and leave Hamilton and me to enjoy the reading.

RITA.

I won't. He can't enjoy it. You have no right to inflict your whims upon him. Why can't you let him alone ?

NANCY.

How silly of you, Rita. Hamilton knows better than to stand on ceremony with me. If he didn't want to read I'm sure he would say so, wouldn't you, Hamilton ?

SEEVER.

To be sure, certainly.

NANCY.

And if you don't want to stay here and read, if you want to go into the library with Rita, as she proposes, and leave me here alone, by all means speak and say so.

SEEVER.

Hm.

NANCY.

[*Quickly.*] You see, he doesn't say so. Go on reading, Hamilton.

[*RITA sits down and fumes.*]

SEEVER.

"One day when one of the royal princesses was calling at our home in Peking, I inquired of her as to where the Empress Dowager was born."

RITA.

Now let's stop to chat, as you suggested.

[*Comes over and sits on the arm of SEEVER'S chair.*]

NANCY.

Certainly not. We are going to read at least half an hour without stopping. Don't sit on

the arm of that chair, Rita ; you are likely to break it, and you don't look at all ladylike and you are in Hamilton's way.

RITA.

The arm of this chair is strong enough to hold even you, and I'm just as ladylike as anybody else, and if I'm in Hamilton's way he can say so. Am I in your way, Hamilton ?

SEEVER.

Hm.

RITA.

You see, he didn't say so.

NANCY.

If the reading bores you, Rita, why don't you go away and come back in half an hour ? Then we shall be ready to stop.

RITA.

I'll leave when I—can't stand it any longer.

NANCY.

Go on, Hamilton.

SEEVER.

"She looked at me for a moment with a blank expression, and finally said, with just the faintest shadow of a smile, 'We never talk about the early history of Her Majesty.'"

RITA.

Excuse me.

[*Exit RITA, right door.*]

NANCY.

[*With a sigh.*] Stop reading, Hamilton. Talk to me. Are you glad the month is almost over?

SEEVER.

It all depends upon to-morrow. No, not even that. Whatever to-morrow brings, this month shall be marked with red letters in my memory. Ich habe geliebt und gelebt. I have lived and loved.

NANCY.

I am afraid you have given your love to one who is unworthy of it.

SEEVER.

No, no. If ever there was a true nobility of soul, true brilliancy of intellect, true harmony of nature, I have found it. My heart has found its mate —

[*Enter DEVON timidly, centre door.*]

NANCY.

What do you want?

DEVON.

Am I interrupting?

NANCY.

I should say you were.

DEVON.

Have you finished what you were saying, Hamilton? Your heart has found its mate, period. That's all you wanted us to know, isn't it?

SEAVER.

More than I wanted you to know.

NANCY.

Why did you leave the library?

DEVON.

I looked at all the Bibles. They are very quaint and beautiful. I've seen them all, thank you.

NANCY.

Mr. Seaver and I are discussing a personal matter.

DEVON.

Were discussing?

NANCY.

Are discussing. Were you going out to keep that business engagement?

DEVON.

No. Really. Never had any idea of going out.

NANCY.

Then return to the library.

DEVON.

I should like a few minutes with you. I, too, have a personal matter to discuss.

NANCY.

I think I know what it is. I can dispose of it to-morrow in a very few seconds. I shall not have time for it to-night.

DEVON.

How is your head?

NANCY.

Still aching.

DEVON.

Hadn't you better take that nap you promised yourself?

NANCY.

I intend to after Hamilton and I have an opportunity to finish our conversation.

DEVON.

Better let her take her nap, Seaver, old chap. She needs it.

NANCY.

Will you go back to the library?

DEVON.

Yes—certainly—I'm going. Go on, Hamilton, your heart—— What were you saying about your heart?

SEEVER.

My heart—my heart ——

NANCY.

Good-night, Mr. Devon.

DEVON.

Good-night. [*Exit DEVON, centre door.*]

SEEVER.

My heart has found its mate, the one who has the power to strike fire from me, to bring out my ambition, my ability, to make me grasp the world by the throat and wring honor and fame and position from it.

NANCY.

I never suspected that I was influencing you like that. You appeared to pay more attention —— [*Enter FITZGERALD, right door.*]

FITZGERALD.

[*Singing.*] Row radlum radlum ; row radlum conavan ; ro-ow radlum radlum ; conika fay

John Sullivan. Ah, there ye are. And here am I, just in the nick of time.

NANCY.

In the nick of time for what?

FITZGERALD.

Sure to take me turn of duty. Away with you, Ham. You've done your stunt of entertaining for the evening. Send the Colonel here in an hour to relieve me.

NANCY.

Turn of duty—relieve you. One would think you were soldiers on guard.

FITZGERALD.

So we are, in a manner of spakin'.

NANCY.

For instance.

FITZGERALD.

Why, as well-behaved guests, it's the duty of us four men to entertain our hostess, to wit, you. We take turns at it. Haven't you noticed?

NANCY.

You give the impression that you have to be driven to it.

FITZGERALD.

No, 'tis not as bad as all that. At first indade we used to fight for the opportunity.

NANCY.

But now ?

FITZGERALD.

Well, now we have acquired various other interests about the house. A month is a long time, Nancy dear. Not but what you might have kept us dancin' attendance every minute of it if ye wanted. But almost from the first day you made violent love to one of the bunch and left the others to their own devices.

NANCY.

I—I did nothing of the kind. You ought to be ashamed to say so.

FITZGERALD.

Anyhow we felt that way about it, and naturally we cooled off so far as you were concerned. However, we know our duty, and we mean to do it at any cost. Be off with you, Ham.

SEEVER.

If Fitz is going to stay there, Nancy, I think I *will* go. May I ?

NANCY.

By all means, if that's the arrangement.

SEEVER.

There is no arrangement, Nancy. Oh, you don't believe Fitz. You know ——

FITZGERALD.

Whisht. There's a lady inquirin' for ye in the room beyant.

SEEVER.

A lady!

FITZGERALD.

Rita is her name. Don't keep her waitin'.

SEEVER.

She—she may really want me. I'll go.

[*Exit SEEVER, right door.*]

NANCY.

The truth now, Dick Fitzgerald. My sister Rita sent you to this room to give Hamilton Seever a chance to break away.

FITZGERALD.

No-o-o.

NANCY.

She did send you!

FITZGERALD.

She requested me to take Ham's place in the reading club, if it was agreeable to everybody.

NANCY.

Well, it isn't agreeable to me.

FITZGERALD.

So I see. It's the foine reader Ham is. But you've found it out pretty late in the day.

NANCY.

I don't care a bit about Hamilton Seaver, or his reading. I'm glad he went away.

FITZGERALD.

Faith, then, if it's I that's disagreeable, we can aisily mend that. Say the word, and I'll find a substitute.

NANCY.

It's disagreeable to be treated like a bottle of medicine. I'm sorry if a little month is sufficient to change the love-sick rhapsodies of my four cavaliers to yawns and excuses.

FITZGERALD.

Are they all excusin' themselves? Sure, that's so. I haven't seen annything of Bob Devon. What's become of him?

NANCY.

I don't know, and I don't care. I'm tired of being made responsible for Bob Devon. I don't ever want to see him again.

[*Enter DEVON, center door.*]

DEVON.

I can't stand it in that close stuffy library any longer.

NANCY.

Why don't you go outside and get a breath of air? Nobody's stopping you.

DEVON.

I should like to, by Jove.

NANCY.

Do. Take your dress suit cases with you.

DEVON.

Oh, just a walk. Five minutes will be enough. W-won't you come along?

NANCY.

No. And you may as well stay away for five centuries as five minutes. I prefer the centuries.

DEVON.

I—I guess I'll go back to the Bibles.

[*Exit DEVON, centre door.*]

FITZGERALD.

What should you like me to read?

NANCY.

Oh, I don't care.

[*Wearily.*]

FITZGERALD

"The Observations of Morehouse's Comet."
How's that ?

NANCY.

Anything at all.

FITZGERALD.

"In the portrayal of the now famous Morehouse comet ——"

NANCY.

Do you mind reading to yourself ?

FITZGERALD.

Not at all.

NANCY.

Assuming that you insist on reading. But if you would condescend to converse.

FITZGERALD.

Sure, why didn't ye say so? Women are strange creatures.

NANCY.

Do you hear anything from the competition?

FITZGERALD.

Nothing. I have no hopes in that quarter. But, oh, Nancy, if I could have another chance, I'd make them a statue that would win the

prize in spite of the ignorance and stupidity of the judges, a statue that Phidias himself would crown.

NANCY.

Why are you so confident ?

FITZGERALD.

I'm sure. I have only to copy line for line the pure and graceful features that I have seen in flesh and blood every one of the past twenty-nine days, and there we have it—the masterpiece of the age.

NANCY.

Oh, Dick, you do talk the most nonsensical blarney.

FITZGERALD.

Blarney, is it ? No, faith, but the truest word that was ever spoken. I've got it all in me mind's eye here ; in fact, it's already sketched out roughly on paper. Oh, but wait till you see it in the clay.

NANCY.

I—I can't understand how you could be so enthusiastic and not say a word to me.

FITZGERALD.

Faith, how could I ? When did I have a chance ? Haven't you been cooped up with Bob Devon all the time ?

NANCY.

Don't mention Mr. Devon any more. Tell me about the statue.

FITZGERALD.

She wears a robe that seems to swirl around her dainty figure from throat to ankles like an amorous wave.

NANCY.

[*Aside.*] The brown dress.

FITZGERALD.

Her head and hands are raised.

NANCY.

[*Aside.*] Good. He noticed that I look rather well so.

FITZGERALD.

But what's the use of description? You must wait until I finish it.

NANCY.

Are you going to give it a name?

FITZGERALD.

To be sure. Her own name.

NANCY.

Oh, how embarrassing. Still ——

FITZGERALD.

Such a pretty name, too, the prettiest in all the world, Catherine.

NANCY.

Catherine ?

FITZGERALD.

What then ! Could there be a more appropriate one ? And she says I may.

NANCY.

Catherine, she—who ?

FITZGERALD.

Catherine, me cousin, the Belfast Venus de Milo.

NANCY.

The housemaid !

FITZGERALD.

The queen of housemaids. Such eyes, such lips, such Niagaras of hair, such a nose.

NANCY.

Enough !

FITZGERALD.

Just enough. The trouble with your average nose is that there's too much of it. But an Irish nose, a Belfast nose, there's a nose that knows its place.

NANCY.

Which the housemaid does not.

FITZGERALD.

True for you. If she knew her place she'd starve sooner than wait on doors and make beds. But she's so modest, d'ye mind, that she never feels the incongruity.

NANCY.

Are you joking with me, Dick Fitzgerald?

FITZGERALD.

Joking? I'm as serious as a judge on his way to be hung.

NANCY.

If I thought so, I'd never speak to you again.
[Enter ROWE, *right door*.

FITZGERALD.

And why not?

NANCY.

Colonel, Dick is teasing me. Make him stop.

ROWE.

Dick will have his joke. Be patient with him. Put up with his pranks for the last time. Remember that we poor wretches must face the firing squad to-morrow.

FITZGERALD.

And three out of four of us must be fired.

NANCY.

Don't remind me of it. Let our last evening together be a cheerful one. Let us eat, drink and be merry.

ROWE.

For to-morrow we die.

FITZGERALD.

Only three of us.

NANCY.

I'm not so sure about that.

FITZGERALD.

What do ye mane? You're not goin' to turn Mormon, Nancy dear?

NANCY.

No, I mean that possibly all four of you will—will ——

FITZGERALD.

Be sent to the right-about, as the Colonel would say. Small fear of that.

NANCY.

On the contrary, nothing is more likely.

[FITZGERALD *winks at ROWE behind NANCY'S back.*

ROWE.

Whatever the morrow will bring forth, to-night is the last night, and I came up to propose that we spend it in our last celebration, we four suitors and you, Nancy, to finish this strange month by showing that at the end of it we are still loyal to you and to each other.

FITZGERALD.

Great idea. The last reunion. Where are the others? [*Enter SEAVER, centre door.*] And in good time, here comes the noble Ham. Ham, will ye join us? The four contestants and the prize are to drain one last cup of good fellowship. Are you with us?

SEEVER.

Charmed, I'm sure, though I don't know just what you are proposing.

FITZGERALD.

Then go find Bob Devon and let's start the chorus.

NANCY.

No. Leave Bob Devon out of it. He's kept me away from you chaps all these weeks, and I've had enough of him. Just us four are sufficient. What shall we do?

FITZGERALD.

All together first with "The Pretty Maid
Milking Her Cow."

NANCY.

Not right off. We'll start with some college
songs. [*Goes to piano.*] Try to sing parts.
Here's the book. How will "Roll on, Silver
Moon" do?

ROWE.

Excellent.

SEEVER.

I'll sing the tenor.

FITZGERALD.

We'll all sing tenor. Let her roll.

[NANCY *plays the opening chords.*]

NANCY.

Now.

ALL.

"Roll on, Silver Mo-oo-oo-n——"

ROWE.

One moment. I thought I heard some one
calling.

MRS. GLOVER.

[*Off stage.*] Colonel Rowe!

ROWE.

It's Mrs. Glover.—Yes.

MRS. GLOVER.

[*Off stage.*] Are you busy?

ROWE.

Why, no. I'm coming at once. [*To the others.*] Excuse me. [*Exit, right door.*]

NANCY.

[*Nervously.*] Ha-ha!

RITA.

[*Off stage.*] Takes you a long while to find that old handkerchief, Hamilton Seaver!

SEAVER.

[*Picking up her handkerchief from floor.*] I've got it. I'm coming. [*To the rest.*] Beg pardon. Promised to get this for Rita.
[*Exit, right door.*]

NANCY.

Looks like a duet, doesn't it?

FITZGERALD.

What's swater than a duet?

[CATHERINE *shyly puts her head in at centre door.*]

CATHERINE.

Would it be troublin' you too much, Mr. Fitzgerald, to come down to the kitchen and taste a bit of boiled ham as we have it at home?

FITZGERALD.

Would it be troublin' me? We'll have to postpone the duet, Nancy dear. Some other time.

[*Exit FITZGERALD quickly, centre door.*

NANCY *looks about bewildered, looks out at centre door, then at right door, then sits at table, disconsolate. She puts her arms on the table, buries her face in them, and sobs. Enter DEVON quietly, centre door, sees NANCY motionless at table, stops and looks around.*

DEVON.

[*Aside.*] Asleep. When she wakes up, she'll be too sleepy to bother about me. I can pretend that I found her so and went to my room. I'll risk it. [*Goes to centre door, comes back, putting on overcoat and carrying hat. Tiptoes over and looks carefully again.*] She is asleep. I'll make sure. [*In a soft, but audible tone.*] Nancy!

NANCY.

[*Sentimentally.*] Bob! [*He is standing behind her.*] Was I dreaming, or did I hear Bob

call me? Poor Bob. He's better than any of them, after all. I've treated him shamefully. I'm a silly jealous fool. He isn't a bit anxious to go out to see that woman. It's all my imagination. [DEVON, *dazed at first, now starts to take off his overcoat. She turns and sees him.*] Ah! You *were* going out. You thought I was asleep. You came in to make sure.

DEVON.

No. Really, I —

NANCY.

Silence. Go.

DEVON.

Nancy, you wrong me. She is nothing to me. Only an old friend whom I want to help. Here. Look at the note again. Read it again and you can't help being convinced.

NANCY.

Leave me!

DEVON.

Here's the note.

[*Dives into inside pocket, pulls out note and in doing so pulls out the photographs which FITZGERALD gave him. They fall on the floor, in view of*
NANCY

NANCY.

Oh ! Her photograph. The brazen wretch.

DEVON.

No. 'Pon my word. They don't even belong to me.

NANCY.

To whom, then ?

DEVON.

To Dick Fitzgerald.

NANCY.

Coward. Sneak. Slanderer. Monster.

DEVON.

No. There's no harm in them. Fitz uses them in his work. They're models, upon my word, they are——

NANCY.

Out of my sight.

DEVON.

Nancy !

NANCY.

Oh !

[*Exit NANCY quickly, centre door.*
DEVON *looks demoralized.*

CURTAIN

THE THIRD ACT

SCENE.—*Discover all characters except CATHERINE and KRATZ, sitting around the breakfast table, finishing the meal.*

SAM.

I ought to be going. It's after ten, but just for this once, I'm tempted to miss my lecture and watch the fun.

NANCY.

You'd better go to your lecture, Sam, and not annoy me.

SAM.

Don't get nervous, Nancy. Be game. Don't weaken at the last moment.

NANCY.

Shut up. I wish I were dead.

SAM.

Going to keep the suspense up to the end, or pass the lemons now ?

NANCY.

Please let me alone, Sam. I'm so miserable.

[*Enter CATHERINE, with letters.*]

CATHERINE.

A letter for Mr. Fitzgerald, and one for Mr. Devon. *[Hands them over.]*

FITZGERALD.

Something tells me there's luck in it. This is my lucky day. May I open it? Thank you. *[Opens letter.]* Holy smoke! What did I tell you? I've won the competition. The judges have accepted my group, and I'm a made man.

CATHERINE.

Mr. Fitzgerald. I'm that glad!

NANCY.

I congratulate you, Dick, with all my heart.

ALL *[ad lib.]*.

Congratulations.

[DEVON has opened his letter and read it.]

DEVON.

Nancy, may I have a few words with you privately?

NANCY.

No.

DEVON.

Only a word. Not to—not because this is the end of the test, but because I want to convince you of a mistake you are making. May I have five minutes?

NANCY.

No.

DEVON.

I promise not to annoy you with any protestations or sentimentality. Merely to put you in possession of important facts. Won't you listen ?

NANCY.

No.

RITA.

[*Aside to SEAVER.*] Looks like Fitz.

SEAVER.

[*Aside to RITA.*] You are wrong.

RITA.

[*Severely.*] You seem very positive, Mr. Seaver.

SEAVER.

I feel so.

FITZGERALD.

Too bad this judgment day didn't fall on your lucky day, Bob. Well, perhaps it did, after all.

NANCY.

Some of your jokes are in very poor taste, Dick.

FITZGERALD.

Sure, I only meant that while there's life,
there's hope.

MRS. GLOVER.

Are you ill, Nancy? You appear to be
dreadfully out of sorts.

NANCY.

I am not.

ROWE.

I see how it is. The long engagement is tell-
ing on her nerves.

NANCY.

There hasn't been any engagement.

ROWE.

In the metaphorical sense—battle.

NANCY.

Oh!

ROWE.

But it will soon be over.

NANCY.

There isn't any funeral either.

MRS. GLOVER.

How snappy you are, child.

NANCY.

I don't mean to be snappy to you, Colonel. It's the effect on me of—others.

RITA.

Now, let me be the bridesmaid, or stage manager, or whatever you want to call it. Everybody leave the room except Nancy. Then you men come back for your answers. No peeking or listening allowed, not even by the stage manager.

NANCY.

Rita, have you no regard for me? Don't you see how utterly desperate and absurd and wretched I am?

RITA.

About what?

NANCY.

About this whole enterprise. I was a fool to have started it, worse than a fool, a stupid, brainless, indelicate donkey.

RITA.

That may be perfectly true, but at this time of day regrets are a bit late. You don't intend to funk the wind-up, do you?

NANCY.

I'm very much inclined to.

RITA

Well, you can't do it. These four men have waited and worked and played the game for four solid weeks, and they are entitled to their answers.

NANCY.

Yes, I know, but it's—it's terribly awkward ; they are such good chaps, I hate to disappoint any of them, and yet I must, don't you see I must?

RITA.

No, not necessarily.

NANCY.

I've got to reject at least three.

RITA.

But it doesn't follow that you will be disappointing them.

NANCY.

Oh, indeed.

RITA.

It's a poor rule that doesn't work both ways. You invited them here believing that in a month you would tire of all but one. Perhaps ——

NANCY.

You needn't go on. I see the other side of the rule, and I sincerely hope that it is true that

all of them may leave the house contented and satisfied.

RITA.

I'm sure that's very noble of you, Nancy.

NANCY.

At the same time you needn't assume that the inevitable result of spending a month in the same house with me is to make a man glad to get away.

RITA.

Not all men, Nancy.

NANCY.

Any particular man, then?

RITA.

I have none in mind.

NANCY.

I'm glad of that. You have a tendency to underestimate your relatives and to overestimate yourself.

RITA.

Don't be cross, Nancy.

NANCY.

I'm not cross.

RITA.

And let us conduct this very senseless proceeding to a sensible end. Everybody clear out, please, at once. Then the men come back here, one at a time, for your final interviews. [*They start to go.*] Wait a moment. We must have some order about it. [*Begins to count out the four men.*] Inty-minty-minety-mo —

ROWE.

Oh, stop. You are robbing the situation of its romance, its dignity.

RITA.

Very well, settle it among yourselves. Disperse. [*Enter CATHERINE, centre door.*]

CATHERINE.

If you please, ma'm, the man is here to fix the steam pipes.

MRS. GLOVER.

To-day? Oh, yes. Wednesday. So it is. Well, tell him to go ahead.

RITA.

No, we can't have strangers about to-day.

MRS. GLOVER.

A mere workman. How can he interfere?

RITA.

They are always in the way. And besides steamfitters are so noisy. And we are all nerved up.

MRS. GLOVER.

Yes. Tell him to go away and come some other time.

CATHERINE.

Yes'm.

[*Exit* CATHERINE.]

MRS. GLOVER.

I had altogether forgotten him. We must have him back as soon as we are settled, however. The pipes are dreadfully bad.

SAM.

My room especially. It never gets above freezing,—thirty-two degrees. I call it the Masonic temple.

[*Reënter* CATHERINE, *centre door*.]

CATHERINE.

I told him, but he won't —

[*Enter* KRATZ. *He is an excitable little German in working clothes, with a huge mass of tools and material. Wears straggly chin whiskers and talks in a high tremulous voice.*]

KRATZ.

Nossir! I am just as shmart like you. You can't make me break no contract. Nossir!

MRS. GLOVER.

It is inconvenient for us to have you here to-day. I will notify your employer when to send you again.

KRATZ.

Nossir! De boss gife me a order, here iss it. [*Produces slip.*] Iss it? It iss. I gotter fix de pipes oder I break de contract. If I break de contract I lose my chob.

MRS. GLOVER.

You don't break any contract by going away, my man. To-morrow will do just as well.

KRATZ.

Nossir. I'm chust so smart like you. I got a order. I'm gone fixin' de pipes.

FITZGERALD.

See here. I'll give you five minutes to clear out. If you're still here after sixty seconds, your blood will be upon your own head.

KRATZ.

Irisher!

FITZGERALD.

Wan, two, three, that's enough.

[*Rushes at KRATZ, who jumps on table and brandishes hammer.*

KRATZ.

Come on. Come on. I show you. Von touch mit de finger unt I kill you in self-defense of my chop und for breach of contract. Yessir. Make it. [*Women scream.*

FITZGERALD.

Ye little villain. I'll scrunch ye wid me wan hand.

CATHERINE.

Dicky darlint! Go aisy.

FITZGERALD.

Don't fear, allanna.

NANCY.

Stop. Please. No violence, I beg you. My nerves are giving way. Let him alone. Let him fix the pipes or dance, or sing, or anything, anything for peace and quiet.

RITA.

I dare say he won't make much trouble.

MRS. GLOVER.

Let him have his way, Dick. You see how useless it is to reason with him.

FITZGERALD.

Who's reasonin' with him?

MRS. GLOVER.

Or struggle. We shall have hysterics and broken furniture and police officers.

KRATZ.

I bet you.

MRS. GLOVER.

Come down and go to work.

KRATZ.

You gif it up, Irisher?

FITZGERALD.

You can thank Mrs. Glover for saving your life.

KRATZ.

Ah, iss it? Maybe yes. I guess aber nit.

RITA.

All we ask of you, Mr. Steamfitter, is to keep out of this room.

KRATZ.

Ven it iss not in dis room trouble mit de pipes I keep out. Ven it iss here trouble I gotter keep in.

RITA.

We'll discuss that later, if necessary. For the present, exit every one, except Nancy.

[Exit every one but NANCY, centre door.]

NANCY *sits and fidgets.* Enter SEAVER, *centre door.* NANCY *turns and sees him.*

NANCY.

Oh!

SEEVER.

[Romantically.] Nancy!

NANCY.

What is it?

SEEVER.

I have come, Nancy, to ask you the same question that I asked a month ago.

NANCY.

Does it really matter?

SEEVER.

It matters a great deal.

NANCY.

I imagined you wouldn't care—that you had changed——

SEEVER.

I shall never change in my regard for you. I shall always think of you as the embodiment of all that is noble and grand in womanhood.

NANCY.

I don't see how you can feel that.

SEEVER.

But I do.

NANCY.

I don't deserve it.

[Enter KRATZ, centre door.]

KRATZ.

Must be dis iss it? All over de house I have tried de pipes. It iss loose someting. Vere iss it?

NANCY.

Will you please go somewhere else?

KRATZ.

I vass somevere else. I vass everyvere else. It iss not loose except it must be loose here.

[Goes to radiator and examines it.]

SEEVER.

I say. Can't you take a walk or a nap?

KRATZ.

Ha. Here iss it. Here iss vot loose iss. Feel it.

SEEVER.

Would you take a holiday if I paid you for the day you lose?

KRATZ.

Feel it! Feel it! Cold like a icicles.

NANCY.

We prefer it so. Please don't tamper with it.

KRATZ.

I gotter. De looseness iss here. Ven I don't fix it here iss all de house cold.

NANCY.

How long will it take you to complete your work in this room?

KRATZ.

How I know? My chimminy, how I know? I find here a looseness, aber vat iss de reason I find not out yet. So soon I find out de reason iss enough. Ven de reason iss in here I must stay here, yes? Ven de reason iss not here I stay not here, no?

SEAUER.

Well, whatever it is you are looking up, look it up and be off.

KRATZ.

I do it.

[*Hammers at radiator. Something comes off. He examines it.*]

NANCY.

Have you located the trouble?

KRATZ.

You see vot it iss here?

NANCY.

Yes.

KRATZ.

Vell, iss notting de matter mit it.

NANCY.

Ah. Then you can try another room. I suggest the library. I have always suspected the pipes in the library.

KRATZ.

Exgoos me. Here [*pointing to part removed*] iss all right, but here [*pointing to rest of radiator*] iss maybe not all right. [*Makes further examination.*] Donner und blitzen, noch e' mal!

SEAVER.

I beg your pardon !

KRATZ.

It iss loose someting un' it iss not loose. De pipes iss all right aber de heat vot it should be in de pipes iss in de pipes not. Und de cold vot it should not be, on account de fire in de boiler iss making boil de vater from de cellar up iss by de pipes not in un' it should be, because by de hole in de pipe—feel it. [*They feel the radiator.*] Iss cold, yes ?

NANCY.

Yes, iss cold.

KRATZ.

Shouldn't be.

NANCY.

Certainly not. But never mind. Wait until to-morrow. Perhaps the steam is frozen. It may thaw over night. Go home and come back in the morning.

KRATZ.

Impossible. I gotter fix it now.

NANCY.

You're tired. Go out on the door-step and rest a while.

KRATZ.

Tired am I not. But mad.

NANCY.

Never work while you are angry. You can't accomplish anything.

KRATZ.

By golly, I do it ven I bust.

NANCY.

I want to ask a favor of you, Mr.——

KRATZ.

Kratz.

NANCY.

Mr. Kratz. Certain family secrets prevent me from explaining fully exactly why this favor is so important, but I sincerely trust you will grant it. I assure you that I will appreciate your kindness beyond words.

KRATZ.

I do it ven it is not against de rules from de Steamfitters' Union.

NANCY.

Oh! Promise me, promise me, Mr. Kratz.

KRATZ.

First I gotter know vot iss it.

NANCY.

Only this. An interview which will determine my whole future is soon to take place in this room. Won't you be kind enough to operate on some other part of the house for a while, so that I will not be interrupted?

KRATZ.

You want me I shall not stay here with you?

NANCY.

Only for a short time.

KRATZ.

Well, you are a nice goil. I do it for you.

NANCY.

Thank you so much.

SEEVER.

[*Aside.*] Confounded impudence.

KRATZ.

I go by the library up. [*Exit, centre door.*]

NANCY.

And now, Hamilton, do you really want your answer?

SEEVER.

Yes.

NANCY.

Really and truly ?

SEEVER.

Really and truly.

NANCY.

Reflect. You have had opportunity in the last four weeks to know me as I am, selfish, flighty, obstinate, bad tempered.

SEEVER.

No, no.

NANCY.

Jealous, revengeful, a flirt.

SEEVER.

You wrong yourself.

NANCY.

I am. I assure you I am, and you would do well not to press your suit. There are so many better girls, better fitted for you, better in every way. Don't insist.

SEEVER.

I do insist.

NANCY.

I'm so sorry. I like you very much, Hamilton. So much that it comes very, very hard

for me to say that—that I have made up my mind never to marry any one.

SEEVER.

You don't mean that?

NANCY.

Yes, I do. And you ought to be very thankful. And promise me it shan't make any difference in our friendship.

SEEVER.

I promise that.

NANCY.

Thank you. I'm going to be a mother confessor sort of person. Come to me with your troubles, your confidence, your complaints, and let me help you abuse the people you don't like. I'm very clever at that.

SEEVER.

Will nothing move you to reconsider your decision?

NANCY.

Don't make it any more difficult or I shall break right down and cry.

SEEVER.

If waiting will do any good —

NANCY.

No. I shall grow colder and sourer and less romantic as time goes on. In a short few years I shall be very fat or very thin, and more disagreeable than ever. I feel it coming on. No, don't wait.

SEAVER.

You give me no hope, then ?

NANCY.

I would not have you waste your life.

SEAVER.

Very well. I shall try to bear it like a man. Good-bye.

NANCY.

Good-bye, Hamilton. Don't grow melancholy, or morose, will you ? Find some other girl ; there are plenty more nice ones. I know you don't think so now, but before very long, in a year or two try it again. Won't you ?

SEAVER.

Good-bye.

[*Exit SEAVER, right door.*]

NANCY.

Poor boy. I hate to have him go away like that. His heart is broken.

[*Enter KRATZ, centre door.*]

KRATZ.

It iss absolute nodings de matter in de library mit de steam pipes. Here iss it in dis blace someding. I can work here now, yes?

NANCY.

No. Go back to the library. I expect some one else.

KRATZ.

Gott in Himmel! Make a hurry up.

NANCY.

Go back to the library. I'll tell you when this room is vacant.

KRATZ.

I wouldn't do it. Iss a crazy man in de library.

NANCY.

A crazy man?

KRATZ.

Ferrickt wie der teufel. I speak to him, he tell me to go to Hell. I don't speak to him, he cry like a little baby.

NANCY.

Cries, you say?

KRATZ.

Sure. Mit de head in de hands. Unt all de time sayin', "It's all ofer! It's all ofer! I lost her. I lost her." Craziiness.

NANCY.

Who is he?

KRATZ.

I should know who iss he. I nefer see him before. I nefer speak to him only ven he tell me to go to Hell.

NANCY.

Describe him. What does he look like?

KRATZ.

Like a crazy man vot is cryink.

NANCY.

Has he light hair?

KRATZ.

I don't know iss it light oder not. I guess about half a pound.

NANCY.

No. Light or dark? Fair or black?

KRATZ.

Positif am I not. Oder it iss red oder it iss black mit maybe a little gray.

NANCY.

Oh, dear, I want to know who it is.

KRATZ.

All right. I go unt ask him.

NANCY.

No, no !

KRATZ.

Now you don't want to know. Vot kind of choint iss it here ? A lunatic hospital, aind it ?

[*Enter ROWE, right door.* NANCY motions KRATZ to go out.

ROWE.

I hoped to find you alone.

KRATZ.

[*Working on radiator.* To ROWE.] Say, Charlie, come here.

[*ROWE goes over to KRATZ.*

NANCY.

I must ask you to excuse us again, Mr. Kratz.

KRATZ.

Sure.

NANCY.

I mean by leaving us alone.

KRATZ.

I wouldn't hoit you.

NANCY.

But I wish you to go elsewhere.

KRATZ.

Vait a minute. Gif us a lift, Charlie, mit de oder end. [*He lifts part of the radiator.*] Pick up. So. [*Rowe lifts his end. They move the part.*] Now come back. Ve got more yet to move. Come on, Charlie.

ROWE.

Here, I've had quite enough of this. Do your own work.

KRATZ.

[*Excitedly.*] Vot do you vant to get mad for? If you don't vant to do it, don't do it. You don't have to do it. I do it myself. Such a lot of impidence peoples.

NANCY.

Don't pay any attention to him.

ROWE.

But I wish to speak privately. I don't want him around.

NANCY.

It's no use trying to get rid of him. He won't go.

ROWE.

I'll—I'll make him go. I'll ——

NANCY.

Please, Colonel, it's quite impossible. Come over to this side where he can't hear us. After all, he's only a workman.

ROWE.

But I want—I want—to make—I want to offer—I intended to ——

NANCY.

Propose. Do it over here. He won't understand. He doesn't understand anything.

ROWE.

Never experienced so preposterous a situation in my life.

NANCY.

Never mind. Go ahead, now, while he is busy.

ROWE.

Nancy, I—oh, pshaw!

[KRATZ pounds the radiator.]

NANCY.

Go on. [*More hammering.*]

ROWE.

But I can't go on with this noise.

NANCY.

Imagine it the thunder of battle. It's just like the thunder of battle, and you are used to that, aren't you, Colonel?

ROWE.

Not to artillery. I was in the infantry, light infantry.

NANCY.

One gets used to him. Try it again.

ROWE.

Nancy, I have come to ask you again to be my wife.

NANCY.

What, after the ridiculous figure I have cut and have made you cut? A soldier's wife should have dignity. I'm very weak on dignity.

ROWE.

You are all that a true woman should be.

NANCY.

Now, Colonel, confess. You are only making this proposal out of a sense of duty, because you think I would feel badly if you didn't.

ROWE.

Really, Nancy.

NANCY.

Don't be angry. You can't help it if it's true.

ROWE.

What put this idea into your head ?

NANCY.

I don't know, but I can't believe you are in earnest.

ROWE.

You have only to say yes and I will prove it.

NANCY.

Colonel, I'm a very wicked, thoughtless girl, but, believe me, I never had any intention to wound any one, you, least of all.

ROWE.

I am sure of that.

NANCY.

Will you despise me, Colonel, if I tell you that I have wasted one precious month of your life, and the lives of three other men for nothing?

ROWE.

Wasted, why wasted?

NANCY.

Because I have decided never to marry at all.

ROWE.

My dear Nancy!

NANCY.

Yes, I see my way clearly. My ideals are too high. I expect too much of people. Marriage would make me the unhappiest person in the world, with one exception—my husband.

ROWE.

This is morbid obsession.

NANCY.

No, it is true.

ROWE.

You must not give way to such a thought. Let me help you.

NANCY.

No. Go, Colonel, and forget me. Go. I am not worthy of you.

ROWE.

You are worthy. [*Loud noises from KRATZ.*]
You are worthy. [*More noise.*] I will not go until — [*More noise.*] I will not go. [*More noise.*] This is unbearable. I'll come back later.

[*Exit ROWE, right door. KRATZ continues to hammer.*]

NANCY.

He's gone. You can stop now.

KRATZ.

I gotter stop anyhow. I got a idea. Maybe it is someding wrong in de cellar by de furnace.

NANCY.

Now, look here. I must have a room to myself. If you are really going into the cellar, I will stay here. If you insist on staying here, I will find another place. Take your choice.

KRATZ.

I go by de cellar in.

NANCY.

Very well. Do so.

KRATZ.

Don't make monkey business mit de shteam pipes. I fix it afterward. [*Exit, left door.*]

[*Enter FITZGERALD, right door.*]

FITZGERALD.

Are ye here, Nancy ?

NANCY.

I am.

FITZGERALD.

Good. Will ye marry me ?

NANCY.

No.

FITZGERALD.

Who's the lucky man ?

NANCY.

Why, you are, of course. At least you are one of them.

FITZGERALD.

No, no, seriously, who gets the prize, who has taken your heart, which of the contestants is to have the glory of leadin' you to the altar ?

NANCY.

None of them.

FITZGERALD.

Is it a black horse, then ?

NANCY.

No. I'm going to die an old maid.

FITZGERALD.

What about the others, Ham and the Colonel and Bob ?

NANCY.

Haven't they told you ?

FITZGERALD.

No. I can't find them. Have they got their mittens, too ?

NANCY.

We—we have promised to be very good friends, the Colonel and Hamilton and I.

FITZGERALD.

What about Bob ?

NANCY.

Mr. Devon and I will remain on formal terms of acquaintanceship.

FITZGERALD.

Oho ! When did ye see him last ?

NANCY.

At breakfast.

FITZGERALD.

What makes the man so slow? Why don't he get into the game?

NANCY.

Mr. Devon and I are not on speaking terms. He is nothing whatever to me.

FITZGERALD.

Do you know, I figured on him as the winner.

NANCY.

You never were farther from the truth.

FITZGERALD.

I stand corrected, as the boy said, after he was spanked and his meals were served to him on the mantelpiece.

NANCY.

I hope you are not much disappointed, Dick.

FITZGERALD.

About what?

NANCY.

About—oh, nothing.

FITZGERALD.

Because ye won't be Mrs. Fitzgerald?

NANCY.

I'm glad you take it so philosophically.

FITZGERALD.

Why, I took it for granted I was a beaten man before I axed you.

NANCY.

A Fitzgerald giving up before the last gun.

FITZGERALD.

Well, then, if you are still open to proposals, it's a different thing.

NANCY.

I did promise myself something more romantic from you, Dick, than this.

FITZGERALD.

Whist a minute. If I begin again and put in all the tricks and thrills and roolins of me eyes, what difference will it make in your answer?

NANCY.

None whatever. I shall still say no, but more reluctantly.

FITZGERALD.

That's all right, then. Here goes.

NANCY.

What do you mean?

FITZGERALD.

Sure, I'm goin' to make the most beautiful offer of marriage that man ever made to woman.

NANCY.

But it will do you no good.

FITZGERALD.

I know it.

NANCY.

Then why go to all this trouble?

FITZGERALD.

'Tis no trouble at all. On the contrary 'tis a real pleasure.

NANCY.

Honestly, Dick, I am quite determined. Nothing that you can say will change me.

FITZGERALD.

So much the better.

NANCY.

I don't understand you.

FITZGERALD.

Don't try to. I owe you a fine proposal and I'm goin' to pay you liberally, like a Fitzgerald.
[KRATZ, *off stage, strikes pipes in a way that*

sounds like a funeral knell.] What noise is that?
A funeral?

NANCY.

No. The steamfitter. [*Noise continues.*]

FITZGERALD.

Sure, I can't make a fiery proposal in my regular style with that sort of knell in me ears.

NANCY.

Then I'll tell you what to do. Assume that you have been rejected as you would have been anyhow and make a farewell speech.

FITZGERALD.

Would you prefer it?

NANCY.

Infinitely.

FITZGERALD.

All right. Here goes. Nancy, the light of me life has gone out. [*One knell on the pipes.*] You may never see me again. [*Knell.*] But I shall be with you in spirit. [*Knell.*] Remember that if ever you need a friend, Dick Fitzgerald [*knell*] stands ready to shed his last drop of blood for you. [*Knell.*] And that's no lie. [*Knell.*] Before we part, is there no service, no proof of my affection that I may perform? [*Knell.*]

NANCY.

Yes.

FITZGERALD.

Huroo. What is it?

NANCY.

Get rid of that steamfitter. He is driving me mad.

FITZGERALD.

Huroo again. [*Knell.*] 'Tis his own funeral bell the Dutchman is tolling. [*Knell.*] Good-bye, Nancy, and God bless ye.

NANCY.

Good-bye.

[FITZGERALD *squares his shoulders, clenches his fists and exits left door. Racket off stage at left.*

FITZGERALD.

[*Off stage.*] Out ye go. [*More noise.*

KRATZ.

[*Off stage.*] Du Irishier, du. [*Voice growing fainter.*] Ich gib dir was, ya. Ach Gott! Ich bin todt. Hilfe! Bolice! Murder! I—I—I—rishier. [*Door bangs.*

NANCY.

[*Calling through right door.*] Rita! Rita!
Rita!

RITA.

[*Off stage at right.*] What is it?

NANCY.

Where are you?

RITA.

I'm up here. Is it all over?

NANCY.

Yes, it's all over.

RITA.

Then we may come down?

NANCY.

You may if you like.

[*Enter RITA, right door.*]

RITA.

Where is he?

NANCY.

I called up to tell you that I am going to my room. Don't expect me at lunch. Don't disturb me for twenty-four hours.

RITA.

Oh! What's the matter?

NANCY.

Nothing.

RITA.

Are—are you engaged?

NANCY.

No. And I'm not going to be.

RITA.

Where's Bob Devon?

NANCY.

What's that to me?

RITA.

Oh! You haven't accepted anybody?

NANCY.

No.

RITA.

I'm so sorry.

NANCY.

Thanks. What's the matter with you?

RITA.

Me? Why?

NANCY.

You look as if you had scarlet fever. Your eyes are fairly burning. Your hair is all mussed up.

RITA.

I know it. I must be a sight. [*Giggles.*]

NANCY.

What does that silly giggle stand for?

RITA.

Hamilton.

NANCY.

Why Hamilton?

RITA.

Well, here he is. Ask him.

[*Enter SEAYER, right door.*]

SEAYER.

I never thought I should find the part. And my necktie was under my left ear.

RITA.

Tell Nancy.

SEAYER.

Oh! Right off?

RITA.

May as well.

SEAVER.

I—I wasn't prepared. I didn't expect—
Nancy, when you rejected my proposal——

RITA.

Of recent date.

SEAVER.

I was unconsolable. At least, I thought I was. Really, I did. But I said to myself, where is there another pearl in this universe like Nancy Glover? And eventually the answer came to me—her sister. Why not—where else? And so I found consolation.

RITA.

Go on, Hamilton. Be more definite.

SEAVER.

I found consolation in Rita. She has promised to—to——

NANCY.

Loan you her cook-book?

SEAVER.

No. She and I are—are——

NANCY.

I know. Vegetarians.

SEAVER.

No. I have asked her to—to——

NANCY.

Well, why don't you say that you and she have agreed to marry each other? Are you afraid? Do you think I'm going to fly into a rage and curse you?

SEEVER.

Of course not. But you see, it's so peculiar.

NANCY.

Not at all.

SEEVER.

My coming here to —

NANCY.

Court me.

SEEVER.

Yes. And then —

NANCY.

Proposing to my sister. Go on. I'll help you out. Strangely enough, I'm not surprised at all. You see, I know Rita.

RITA.

Nancy!

NANCY.

I know what a sweet, winsome girl she is, and how suitable you are for each other.

RITA.

Oh!

NANCY.

And how irresistible she is —

RITA.

How sweet of you, dear.

NANCY.

When she makes up her mind to get anything.

RITA.

Really!

NANCY.

What an ideal couple you will make.

SEEVER.

I think so.

NANCY.

Two souls with but a single thought—vegetarianism.

RITA.

Are you truly glad, Nancy?

NANCY.

Truly and honestly.

RITA.

That's good of you.

NANCY.

Kiss me, dear. I'll be careful of your nose.
[*They kiss.*]

RITA.

I only wish you were as happy as I.

NANCY.

I could have been if I hadn't a sense of humor. I saw him first, you know.

RITA.

That style of joke is unbecoming and improper.

NANCY.

Don't mind me to-day. I'm out of sorts. But, seriously, I wish you all the joy in the world.

RITA.

You—you forgive me, Nancy?

NANCY.

For what?

RITA.

For taking Hamilton away, as it were.

NANCY.

As it were. Don't you know perfectly well that I could have had ——— Certainly I forgive you, with all my heart.

RITA.

Thank you.

NANCY.

And I congratulate you, Hamilton, sincerely.

SEEVER.

By Jove, I am to be congratulated.

NANCY.

And I will try to be a sister to you. I left that out before, didn't I?

SEEVER.

Y-yes. [*Enter* MRS. GLOVER *and* ROWE.

MRS. GLOVER.

We heard you talking together, so we couldn't wait any longer, could we, Colonel?

ROWE.

No. Now, then, report to your superior officer. [*Points to* MRS. GLOVER.

NANCY.

[*Saluting.*] I have the honor to report that your daughter has engaged the enemy.

MRS. GLOVER.

My darling. [*Hugs her.*]

NANCY.

Not this daughter. The other one, Rita.

MRS. GLOVER.

Rita !

NANCY.

Rita. There is her prisoner of war.

MRS. GLOVER.

My baby. Oh, Rita. [*Kisses her.*]

ROWE.

My very best wishes.

MRS. GLOVER.

Now for you, Nancy.

ROWE.

Now for your report, Nancy.

NANCY.

[*Saluting.*] Your other daughter has the honor to report—nothing doing.

ROWE.

What, all four rejected ?

NANCY.

Three of the enemy have surrendered and been parolled, and the remaining one has been repulsed.

ROWE.

Without quarter ?

NANCY.

Absolutely.

MRS. GLOVER.

Poor Mr. Devon.

ROWE.

Too bad.

NANCY.

Don't worry about him. He may be quite as cheerful as Hamilton or you.

ROWE.

I—I was very deeply agitated at first, Nancy.

NANCY.

But now ?

ROWE.

But now—I—I have found consolation.

NANCY.

What, you too ? Good gracious, where ?

MRS. GLOVER.

Nancy, my child, Rita, I am afraid I am a very silly mother, but the Colonel was so insistent——

ROWE.

We have been such good companions——

NANCY.

Oh—merciful heavens!

MRS. GLOVER.

And when I urged that I was too old to think of such things, the Colonel surprised me by confessing to exactly the same number of years as my own, thirty-nine.

NANCY.

Sam was right. He said it looked purplish in spots.

ROWE.

I assure you I was prematurely gray, quite a boy when it first began to turn.

NANCY.

Oh, that's all right, Colonel. Don't apologize. I shall need your recipe soon.

RITA.

What shall we call you, Colonel or papa?

ROWE.

Papa by all means. Who wants to kiss
papa? [*Opens his arms for* NANCY.

NANCY.

I'd rather shake hands at first. I shall be
used to it presently, but not yet.
[*Enter* FITZGERALD, *centre door*.

FITZGERALD.

Well, well, well. Don't say a word. I saw
it comin' years ago. Well done, Colonel, and
you, Ham. Thought ye were sly, didn't ye?

NANCY.

They have all found consolation but you,
Dick.

FITZGERALD.

Faith, then don't worry about me. [*Calling
off stage.*] Katy, darlint!

NANCY.

What!

FITZGERALD.

[*Not hearing her.*] She's ashamed to come
in, the foolish child. Ashamed of what? Isn't
she the fairest, swatest flower that ever grew?
Answer me that.

SEEVER.

You don't mean to say ——

FITZGERALD.

I don't mane to say what ?

SEEVER.

And yet, why not ?

FITZGERALD.

I'm as happy as the burds in May. [*Speaking to CATHERINE off stage.*] Why do ye hang back ? Come in, Kitty dear. What's that ? Miss Nancy ? Why should ye be afraid of Miss Nancy ?

NANCY.

Surely you don't mind me, Catherine. Do let us see you in your new rôle.

[*Enter CATHERINE modestly, centre door.*]

MRS. GLOVER.

We shall miss you very much, Catherine.

RYTA.

But the family's breaking up anyway, so we don't begrudge you your happiness.

NANCY.

And we all hope that you and Mr. Fitzgerald will find life one grand sweet come-all-ye.

CATHERINE.

Thank you all kindly.

FITZGERALD.

And what made ye afraid to come in when everybody is full of love for you?

CATHERINE.

I was timid for fear Miss Nancy wouldn't like the idea of me cuttin' her out, so to speak.

[*Laughter.*]

NANCY.

Th—that's good. That's the way Dick put it, I presume?

CATHERINE.

No. He simply told me the facts.

NANCY.

Did he happen to tell you the fact that I refused him this morning?

CATHERINE.

Oh, yes.

NANCY.

Well, then, your choice of phrases can't be very accurate, can it? I couldn't be cut out if I had first choice, could I? [*Laughs uneasily.*]

CATHERINE.

Well, the point is that you didn't have first choice.

NANCY.

I didn't?

CATHERINE.

No, ma'am. Mr. Fitzgerald proposed to me a week ago.

FITZGERALD.

[*To CATHERINE, aside.*] Sh—sh ——

NANCY.

How could he? He asked me only a few minutes ago.

CATHERINE.

I know it.

NANCY.

Well, then ——

CATHERINE.

I told him to.

NANCY.

What does she mean, Dick?

FITZGERALD.

Sh—sh—I said I was goin' to pop, and she said go ahead and pop.

CATHERINE.

No. I want you to understand that I have tried to be considerate, miss. Dick says to me last night, "Catherine," he says, "it's all a mistake. Miss Glover and I will never be hitched because we don't hitch. We don't like the same people nor the same tunes nor the same food. I thought I could get along with her until I heard her remark," says Dick, meanin' you, "that Dan'l Webster was a greater orator than Dan'l O'Connell. After that," says he, "I knew there could never be annything between me and her," meanin' you.

FITZGERALD.

And not alone for that, min' you, but because ——

NANCY.

Go on, Catherine.

CATHERINE.

So says he to me, says he, "Catherine —— " Well, annyhow, I said I'd marry him. "But wait a bit," says I, "don't tell a soul, for maybe Miss Nancy wouldn't like it, you being one of her beaux. Say not a word until the end of the month, and then ax her to marry you as if nothing had happened. She'll say no, and then she'll think she's refused you, and her feelin's won't be hurt."

NANCY.

Thank you.

CATHERINE.

"But," says he, "suppose she says 'yes'? Look at the fix I'll be in then." "'Tis a chance we run," says I, "but do it half-hearted like, restrain yourself, don't make it too strong," says I. "I'll not," says he. And this blissed mornin' when he came back to me wid a heavenly smile on his face I knew he'd been successful in gettin' himself thrown down.

NANCY.

You were never in any danger, Catherine.

CATHERINE.

Sure, I know that. If Dick had been caught he would have backed out, but 'twould have been terrible awkward.

NANCY.

Would you have backed out, Dick?

FITZGERALD.

It isn't fair to make me answer that, with Catherine lookin' on.

CATHERINE.

Say no, dear. I don't mind. Lie a bit.

NANCY.

I wanted to see if he would, without your urging.

FITZGERALD.

You're not angry, Nancy darlint?

NANCY.

No. Simply amused, Mr. Fitzgerald.

FITZGERALD.

A man can't regulate his heart like a chronometer, can he?

NANCY.

No, nor his sense of honor, neither.

FITZGERALD.

Sense of honor. What's the matter with my sense of honor?

NANCY.

It's not quite up to the standard, is it?

FITZGERALD.

To what standard?

NANCY.

The standard of other gentlemen.

CATHERINE.

Meanin' these gentlemen, for instance?

[*Pointing to SEAVER and ROWE.*]

NANCY.

Yes, these gentlemen, for instance.

CATHERINE.

Well, then, let me tell you, Miss Nancy, that they're all in the same boat.

NANCY.

How ?

CATHERINE.

Mr. Seaver's been engaged to Miss Rita and the Colonel to Mrs. Glover this long time.

NANCY.

Is this true ? How do you know ?

CATHERINE.

I couldn't help overhearing them as I went about my work. I even heard them plan to have the Colonel and Mr. Seaver do just what Mr. Fitzgerald did. That's how I got the idea.

NANCY.

They—they were only bluffing, too ?

CATHERINE.

That's all.

NANCY.

And they would have been disappointed if I had accepted them ?

CATHERINE.

Horried.

NANCY.

Oh!

SEAVER.

In my own case, Nancy, I wish to explain —

NANCY.

Is it true? Did Rita have to make you propose to me?

SEAVER.

Not make me. Not make me.

NANCY.

But she was satisfied, she wanted you to.

SEAVER.

She agreed with me that it was best.

NANCY.

[To ROWE.] You, too? You made a fool of me too?

ROWE.

Don't put it that way, Nancy. I simply —

NANCY.

You doddering old imbecile.

MRS. GLOVER.

Nancy! How can you? Instead of insulting us you ought to be grateful for our thoughtfulness for sparing your feelings.

NANCY.

I suppose so. [*Laughing wildly.*] Ha-ha-ha! And so it appears that instead of breaking their hearts it was I who was jilted, I who was thrown down, I who am the old maid, the booby prize, the boogaboo, the person who is kept waiting at the church.

MRS. GLOVER.

You are so unreasonable, my child, and you might be very happy.

NANCY.

How?

MRS. GLOVER.

By making up with Mr. Devon.

NANCY.

Because he's the only one left? Because he's the only one I can get? You think that's a good easy method of getting me out of the way, of pacifying me. But you can't do it. I won't have him if I'm to be the standing joke of the family as long as I live and die an old maid. Never. [*DEVON is seen coming down*

the centre stairs, anxiously. NANCY rushes toward him.] Go back! Get out! If you dare to speak to me, I'll scratch your eyes out! You miserable apology! You left-over remnant!

FITZGERALD.

Hold on. Come down here, Bob.

DEVON.

I guess not!

NANCY.

He'd better not!

MRS. GLOVER.

Nancy, have you lost your senses? Why does Mr. Devon deserve such treatment of you?

NANCY.

He knows why.

DEVON.

Hanged if I do.

NANCY.

Well, then, I know why.

RITA.

I didn't think you would be such a bad loser, Nancy.

NANCY.

I'm not a bad loser. I'm not a loser anyhow, and besides it isn't that at all. I hate Bob Devon because he's a low, immoral character.

ALL.

Oh!

MRS. GLOVER.

Impossible!

NANCY.

Is it? Ask him to deny that he carries the photographs of shameless women about with him! Ask him!

DEVON.

I told you they were not my photographs.

NANCY.

I didn't say his photographs. I said shameless women's photographs.

DEVON.

But they didn't belong to me. They are Dick Fitzgerald's. He used them to study from.

NANCY.

Ha!

FITZGERALD.

Is that so? Ha! Well, they are mine, ha or no ha. I was showing them to Bob when you came in and he didn't have a chance to give them back to me. Let's have them now, Bob. [DEVON *hands them carefully over the stair rail.*] Ye don't believe it, do ye?

NANCY.

No, I don't.

FITZGERALD.

Then look at the backs of 'em. To Mr. Richard Fitzgerald, from his humble assistant, Mrs. Alexander O'Hara.

NANCY.

Why didn't he show me that before?

DEVON.

I never thought of looking.

FITZGERALD.

Come down, Bob.

NANCY.

No. I can still prove him to be a vile, deceiving scoundrel. I don't want him in this house. I don't want any of my relatives to have anything to do with him. He is mixed up in an affair with another woman.

FITZGERALD.

So are the whole of us.

NANCY.

He got a note from her last night. She found out in some way that he was here, that he was planning to desert her, and she sent him a message that unless he came to her at once, she would do something desperate.

FITZGERALD.

What of it? I expect no less than five suicides as soon as my own engagement is announced.

NANCY.

But this woman has strong claims on him. He admits it himself.

DEVON.

I can explain everything.

FITZGERALD.

To be sure you can. Come down here.

NANCY.

I refuse to remain in the same room with him.

FITZGERALD.

I'll keep ye separate. [*Draws imaginary line in centre of stage.*] All the men on this side. Women on the other. We must stand together for our respective sexes. [ROWE, SEAVER, FITZGERALD and DEVON cross to left.] Good. What answer have ye to make to the accusation, Devon?

DEVON.

It's all a mistake, superinduced by jealousy.

NANCY.

Jealousy!

DEVON.

I did get a note last night. Here it is. "My dear Bob: Why didn't you tell me how serious matters were? If you have any regard, any pity for me, come to me at once, at once, or I shall do something desperate."

FITZGERALD.

Mm. Relative?

DEVON.

No.

FITZGERALD.

Mm.

DEVON.

But it's perfectly simple. I'm going to give you the facts in confidence, relying on you not to betray them. My partner has been having silly rows with his wife, who is terribly in love with him and suspicious of everything he does. In a fit of jealous rage she construed a perfectly innocent piece of conduct on his part as infidelity. She told him that she trusted him no longer and never wanted to see him again. I reasoned with her; tried to bring her to her senses; in vain. She refused to talk to her husband; then he rushed away, threatening to commit suicide. I told him to stay away one night for the purpose of frightening her and making her realize the possibilities. He must have stayed away last night. His wife, penitent and remorseful, evidently sent me this note, asking me to come and help her get him back. I wanted to go and find him and bring him home, but Nancy objected, so I didn't. And that's the whole truth.

NANCY.

I don't believe a word of it.

FITZGERALD.

Why not?

NANCY.

Because I don't.

DEVON.

Because you have a mean, ungenerous mind.

NANCY.

What ?

DEVON.

If you had given me five minutes this morning I could have cleared myself.

NANCY.

You haven't cleared yourself yet. How do we know this explanation of yours isn't a cooked up yarn ?

DEVON.

Because I have the confirmation of it here in my hand, the letter I received this morning in the mail. Please notice that the stationery and handwriting are the same as the one delivered last night. Let me read it. "Dear Bob: I can't imagine why you failed me last night. Doubtless an accident prevented. This is to let you know that dear old Jack came home last night after all, and we have forgiven each other and are never going to question each other again."

[*Hands notes to* FITZGERALD.]

FITZGERALD.

Does the other side care to examine Exhibits A and B ?

[NANCY *snatches notes out of FITZGERALD'S hands and compares them.*

FITZGERALD.

Is the other side satisfied ?

NANCY.

[*Spitefully.*] Why couldn't he have said so right away ? It's his fault for acting like a fool.

DEVON.

It's your fault for not being willing to believe a gentleman. I'm not used to having my word questioned, to being treated like a criminal under indictment. It's unfair, unreasonable, unladylike.

NANCY.

Well, now that you have cleared yourself, let's say nothing about it.

DEVON.

Say nothing more about it ! Do you imagine that I'm going to let it pass that way ? Do you imagine that I can be trampled on and spurned and abused as I have been since last night without a protest ? I guess not ! Say no more about it ! I think there is something very definite and pressing for you to say about it.

NANCY.

I—I was wrong, and I'm sorry. Is that enough?

DEVON.

Technically, I suppose it is, though it's a poor reparation for what you've made me suffer. However, I accept your apology, and now if you'll pardon me, I'm going home.

NANCY.

Oh!

DEVON.

Where's my bag?

FITZGERALD.

Come now, Bob, forgive the poor girl. Shake hands with her.

DEVON.

Oh, pshaw!

FITZGERALD.

Go ahead, there's a good fellow. She can't help her little ways. Bring her up here, Mrs. Glover.

[RITA and MRS. GLOVER lead the demoralized and bewildered NANCY to the centre of the stage.]

DEVON.

I—I don't bear you any grudge, Miss Glover. Here's my hand. Try to be more generous to the next man who offers you an honest love. Good-bye. *[Takes her hand.]*

NANCY.

[Breaking down.] Oh, Bob, I didn't mean to. Don't go away like this and leave me all alone. Everybody's engaged but me, even Catherine, and I feel so lonely and wicked, and cheap. Please don't go away despising me. I love you, Bob, really and truly, and honestly. I shall kill myself if you hate me. It's only because I thought you didn't care for me that I was so horrid last night and this morning. Please don't go away forever. Oh, please don't go away.

DEVON.

If I stay will you promise to marry me?

NANCY.

Yes, yes, oh, yes.

DEVON.

And not doubt me any more?

NANCY.

No.

DEVON.

Then I'll stay.

NANCY.

Oh!

*[Throws her arms around him and sobs.
He kisses her.]*

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